

EVERY "BOY SCOUT" SHOULD READ THIS

AMERICAN WEEKLY INDIAN

BY COLONEL SPENCER DAIR

HELD UP AT SNAKE BASIN



AMERICAN
PATENT



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Held Up at Snake Basin

or

The Renegade's Death Vote

By COL. SPENCER DAIR

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

BASIL TYLER—A fighting member of the Royal North-West Mounted Police, that splendid semi-military body that are making of British North America a haven of rest and plenty for the peaceful artisan. Basil Tyler was sent into Keewatin territory, along Great Fish River where it empties into Lake Garry, in the wonderful North-West, to find and stamp out the outlaw band led by Apache Tim Terry, the terror of the territory. The mission of the young man was one of danger and required ability to plan and to fight. Although taken a prisoner by the renegade band, and condemned by a death-vote to death at the hands of one of their members, Basil Tyler saved himself and the life of beautiful Edith Ross, in a manner that is well worth perusing.

EDITH ROSS—The beautiful daughter of a newspaper editor of the far North-West. She is a brave girl, ready with her "gun," and not afraid to die by her own hand rather than be forced into a dread marriage with an outlaw chief. Her danger, her narrow escape from becoming an unloved wife, and her dashing ride to safety, makes up an uncommon history of the country where brave men and women are living to-day.

WHISKEY BILL ROSS—Father of beautiful Edith Ross. In spite of his name he is a Prohibitionist, and never took a drink in his life. His mistaken zeal in his life work, made trouble for his daughter; but his life work was there just the same.

GALE MORRIS—Owner of the "Blue Wing" mine. Now he was also a trapper, a hunter, a gold-pro prospector, and a good fellow all the time. He plays a brave part in this story, and is worth remembering with a sign when his life work is accomplished in one daring, splendid action that

saved the lives of his friends Basil Tyler and Edith Ross.

SLEEPY GEORGE POTTER—A trapper, whose sleepy ways made him the joke of his friends. Like most sleepy persons he was a terror when he woke up. He wakes up in this story and proves himself to be a hero.

APACHE TIM TERRY—A half-breed Indian outlaw and famous gunman of Keewatin territory, British North America. There's one thing about Apache Tim and that is although he was a "gun-man" to the core, he had brains. He led his wicked life, in a wicked age, in a wicked environment, and died at last like a renegade should with his boots on, while the spectral figure of a Revolutionary soldier, pursued him to his death.

WILD FRANK ROONO—A member of Apache Tim's outlaw gang. A bigger rascal never lived. He was a thug who was unredeemable, but he was brave with the false physical courage of the outlaw. His story points a moral in the viciousness with which he surrounded himself as part of the tale of an erring career.

WALLA WALLA CY MITCHELL—A bandit, just pure and simple in his vice. An elemental man who might have been something had he started better in another field than an outlaw's camp.

POKER TOM HUDSON—A bandit, who figured largely in some of the tragic events that surrounded the famous act of outlawry, which rivals some of the depredations of the Jesse James gang of bandits, and which has gone down into history now as the "Hold Up at Snake Basin."

LONG JACK O' TEXAS—A thug from the old pan-handle. A member of Apache Tim's gang.

TEEKE—A Kogmollock Indian. He was a member of Apache Tim's bandit gang, but didn't like "straight arm punches."

CHAPTER I.

THE DEATH VOTE.

"The death-vote! Take the Death-vote."

A howl of demand arose from every outlaw in the wild party.

Apache Tim Terry, leader of the bandit gang hesitated.

He started to move away with a laughing negative when again the appeal rang forth.

"The Death-vote! We demand a death-vote!"

There was a ring now in the voices of the outlaws that Apache Tim did not like.

He lead his bloodthirsty band by keeping his fingers on the pulse of their emotions all of the time.

Apache Tim knew when to threaten, and when to yield, when to kill and when to pardon.

He knew now that he must take action before the demand changed to a mutiny against his authority.

Wild Frank Roono, Apache Tim's close confidant, strolled over to the leader's side.

"Better let 'em have thar way," Wild Frank whispered. "They's out fer blood to-day. We cayant hol' 'em as they's feelin' now."

Apache Tim's face lowered in ugly rage as he thought over his position.

A big man, was Apache Tim Terry, who got his frontier gun-man's title from his frequent fights with Apache Indians on the "Old Smoky Hill Trail" years before his arrival where the Great Fish River empties into Lake Garry in Keewatin territory, British North America.

Now Apache Tim was as truculent as the Apache Indians he used to fight.

He had surrounded himself with a terrible gang of gun-men, thieves, and murderers, and was engaged in all the deviltry that made the point he infested with his presence notorious throughout the great North-West.

"It's a fool's-play to take a death-vote on our prisoners," Apache Tim whispered to Wild Frank. "We will lose more time than we gain by sending them to their graves."

"You're gettin' tender-hearted in yar old age," said Wild Frank in return. "Better git that thar feelin' out o' yar haid er some o' thet gang o' ourn 'ull croak ye."

Still Apache Tim stood with his eyes fixed on the ground.

A tall man was the outlaw chief.

He must have stood six feet in his stockings as he gazed down at the earth as if trying to read an answer to his thoughts in the soil beneath his feet.

Apache Tim's hair was light. He wore a heavy light-brown beard. His shoulders were wide and his movements showed his great strength.

But when he raised his eyes the effect was startling.

For his eyes, while light-blue, cold, deadly in their steady gaze, bore in each pupil a red-hazel spot.

These spots seemed to grow, and diminish with the moods of the outlaw.

When the hazel spots seemed to be eating up the blue then those who knew Apache Tim started for their guns quick or hunted a spot in the safer depths of the great North-West forest.

When the hazel spots danced Apache Tim was what his name Apache meant.

He was then a demon, seeing only blood, happy only in slaughter, wild, fearless, a sneaking, deadly Indian, for in the outlaw's blood there raged the unruly corpseles of his Indian mother, which the white-blood from his trapper father could not dominate.

But now Apache Tim was at his best mood.

He glanced over his fierce band.

The outlaws were grouped around a fire of logs and brush, for it was early fall, and there was a suggestion of keenness in the air that made the fire grateful in its warmth.

"Yes, the gang's in bad-humor," muttered Apache Tim to Wild Frank. "What's the matter?"

"Been a hard summer," cried Wild Frank, "they ain't been no good pickins in a helluvawhile."

Apache Tim shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, it ain't my fault is it?"

"Naw. Ye sees, Apache Tim, ye' 'us the lader uv this hyar gang, an' the boys think it's up ter ye ter git over summin thet'l pay."

"They do, eh? Well just you tell them there's nothing that's got a disposition to sit down and let some one else hustle for him wanted in *my* gang. I don't want no one here that has to be led by a string. Tell the boys if they don't like the way I'm hustlin' for them to git out and hustle for themselves."

Just then Teeke, a Kogmollock Indian, slouched over to the bandit chief.

"Tey say, Apache Tim hold pow-pow with Wild Frank. Then he tell 'um."

With this remark, not as lucid as it might have been, the Indian slouched back to the bandits; who having made their demand were now playing cards.

Their howls as this one won, or that one lost, punctuated the atmosphere with awful oaths.

Apache Tim sneered.

"I suppose Teeke wishes me to understand that the gang are willing for me to talk over things with you—but that they propose to hold the death vote, in spite of me."

Wild Frank nodded.

"You knows the boys," he replied. "Some o' em ain't got no sense, an' some o' em hez got too much. But they's averages up pritty fair. Ef I war you I'd gin in. Let 'um take thar vote; twon hurt ye any. Ye kin see a way outer et ef ye wishes, Tim. See?"

Apache Tim "saw" all right.

But it irked him to think that he had to "stand for the demands of a lot of bum bandits" as he put it to Wild Frank.

"I 'preciates yar feelins' pardner," answered Wild Frank. "I knows yar plans better than they does, but ef I war ye I'd gin in and let em take that thar vote. Ef 'tain con-veen-ient like ter folloer out the vote, why 'taint."

"But you know what they want to vote about don't you?"

"Naw, an' I don't give a damn. Them's kin vote ter do annythin' they wants ter. It makes men feel good ter vote. But thar ain't no Congriss I ever hearn tell on thet had no call ter pay no attention ter any votes them people put in the ballot box, whether they casts thar votes here under the do-min-yon o' Canady, er out thar in them Unite'd States. Congriss er Parleemunt don't make no odds—no polityciun don't hev ter pay no 'tention ter such hog-wash ez a voter."

Even Apache Tim laughed at Wild Frank's somewhat anarchistic views of elections by popular votes.

"You think that voters don't count?" Apache Tim asked.

"Not two-fer-a-Canada cent. They's ain't no good except ter put ye in office. Arter thet yez kin do as you domplases."

"Then your advice to me is to let the gang take a death vote and then do as I please?"

"Shore. Be a polityciun! Ye know how ye got ter yar job as chief uv this yar gang o' men?"

"Yes. You voted for me to take the place of your leader."

"Shore. We voted fer ye arter ye had put in erbout a yar o' log-rollin' fer the job. Eh?"

"I don't-t-t know-w-w."

"Wal I duz. Ye gits the job 'cause ye played th' game fer it. Jest ez other polityciuns does. Don't ye go fer ter think thet merit counts fer anythin' in this yar woild. Merit ain't nuttin'. The way ter git the jobs an' ter hole 'em is ter be a good polityciun. Thar's a lot o' truck goin' erbout thet 'merit wins.' Believe me. There ain't nuttin' in it. Wot wins is good log-rollin' an' good politicinners work. Now ye gits busy, en play a little politics in this hyar case. Let th' boys take thar death-vote. Then ye fergits ter force the vote. Ye wins, the boys is satisfied, and all's merry as a weddin' morn."

Apache Tim knew that his faithful assistant in the work of keeping the bandit gang in some kind of bounds, was right.

"I'm sorry. I didn't want to get into this broil. But now I'm here I suppose I'll have to stand for it."

So saying Wild Frank and Apache Tim strolled over to where the bandits stood watching the poker-game, which several of the gang were playing.

"Well, boys," cried Tim. "What's the row? What's all the trouble about?"

"Nuttin'," coolly cried a thug, who was known in the band as Walla Walla Cy Mitchell. "We jet's is naturally anxis like ter hev our rights ree-spec-ted by Apache Tim, our gallant leader."

The hazel spark in Apache Tim's eyes began to grow larger.

The leader was short-tempered.

This apparent blow at his authority stirred his quick rage.

But a warning look from Wild Frank stilled the eager words of reproach upon Tim's lips.

"E-e-um," said Tim. "That ain't no way to take up grave questions like that. Now Walla Walla Cy spit out your feelins'. What's the row? An' what do you boys want?"

"Nuttin'," surlily replied Walla Walla Cy. "We wants our rights."

"You gets 'em every time as long as I'm leader of this band."

"Don't know wheter we does er doesn't—yet."

"Walla Walla, are you lookin' for trouble?"

The blue in Apache Tim's eyes could hardly be seen now. Instead there was a wide expanse of reddish-hazel spots that flickered and danced in cold menace.

Walla Walla Cy started to answer boldly.

But he happened to raise his eyes. He saw the deadly spots flicker and he cleared his throat and said nothing but sullenly gazed at the suspended poker game.

A quiver ran around the bandit ranks.

No one cared to beard the leaping light in Apache Tim's eyes.

The situation began to be awkward.

Wild Frank saved it from becoming bloody by rushing forward with a remark.

"Seems ter me uts a helluvapowwow we er havin' as ter votin' whether we are ter take a death-vote ter make a band killin' uv a sneakin' coyote uv a copper."

"That's right," cried Apache Tim. "Seems to me

you fellows want to make a heap fuss over whether we decide that we must as a band, hunt down and kill a cheap skate, like this fellow Basil Tyler."

"Oh, I dunno," sullenly replied Walla Walla Cy. "Et's not the feller thet we gives a hang fer but it's the prin-cee-pul o' the thing. Ef we let's this year Basil Tyler git hyar and git ter mussin' things up fer us, we mought ez well dis-band th' gang fer good and all."

"Ho, Basil Tyler?" interrupted the Indian Teeke. He had been listening to the conversation with evil-looking smiles on his face. "Who is Basil Tyler?"

There was a rapid interchange of glances between Apache Tim and Wild Frank.

In answer to the almost imperceptible nod of Wild Frank's, Tim spoke.

"He is a member of the Royal North-West Mounted Police force," the chief outlaw replied.

"Oh! I know. He heap tall man, heap broad shoulders. Heap fight. Oh, heap!"

The snaky eyes of the Indians were turned toward Apache Tim as he spoke.

"That's Tyler to a 'T,'" replied Tim. "He's been sent from Fort Keewatin to hunt us down and put us in jail."

A stunning roar burst from the bandits.

It was a burst of jeering laughter.

"Put us in jail? Arrest us? One man to do this en we ez fifty," screamed Walla Walla Cy. "Say, Tim, ain't ye foolin'?"

"No."

"Hones' now?"

"Sure thing. An' boys, I think unless we are very careful he may put it over?"

"What?"

The gang yelled in unison, this short word, when they heard what their leader said.

Some laughed. Others shook their fists. Hands stole to revolvers. Other hands clutched rifles.

"Say, don't make fun o' us," cried Walla Walla Cy. "We ain't er lot o' kids."

"I'm not making fun of you."

"Wot kinder a show hez this chap—gwan, Tim, yer likker's soured on ye this mornin' an' ye has a fit o' yar liver."

Walla Walla Cy jeered at his leader as he spoke.

"Now, boys," replied Tim, "be reasonable. If you want to make a band matter of this, why it's up to you. But let me warn you. This Tyler is only one but there's the law about him and behind him a-backin' him up."

"Wot d' we care fer the law," sneered Walla Walla Cy. "Thar ain't no law up hyar on the front-er."

"Not so far. But with the advent of this Basil Tyler there may be," quietly replied Tim. "So far for years we have run a good game out here. We are so far toward the Arctic Circle that people back further where the country is more settled don't pay much attention to us. We've been runnin' our game with no limit to et, an' now, well, this hyar Mounted Police-man ought to be left strictly alone."

"Don't see it fer mine," put in Wild Frank. "Why should we uns let this hyar chap git a'goin. Et seems ter me et's up ter us ter kill Basil Tyler, whether he's a Mounted Pol-eeceman er a Unmounted one."

"Oh, you can kill him in about a second o' yer time," snapped Apache Tim. "What I'm afraid of is the

come-back that will come after you chaps has got him."

"A come-back? Wot ye mean?" said Walla Walla Cy. "How kin thar be a trouble frum a killin one infarnal po-leece-mum?"

"Because he will be the embodiment of the law and it ain't the copper that you fellows will kill but ye will kill the law. Now the law don't die but comes up arter ye have killed it and makes more trouble for ye. The more you kill it the more it comes back."

"Say, ain't he the tonguey one?" shouted Wild Frank. "We didn't think we'd 'lected no fron-teer lawyer to rule us, did we boys when we 'lected Apache Tim ter be our leader?"

"If Wild Frank had an opinion that he would stick to for five minutes without changing it a dozen times, I'd drop dead," replied Apache Tim. "I see you boys mean to take a vote. Now go ahead. Vote as fast as you want."

There were some long heads in the ranks of the bandits that didn't feel like mixing into the trouble and who sided with Apache Tim.

There was no fear of killing in the heart of Apache Tim and which actuated his feeling that it was bad policy to kill Basil Tyler, even if the young Mounted Policeman was in Keewatin territory for the purpose of destroying Apache Tim's bandit band.

Tim would rather murder Basil Tyler than not.

But he knew the destruction of his gang would eventually follow any overt attack on the authority vested in Tyler.

This feeling was shared in common with the wiser men of the gang and there soon was an animated argument as to whether to take the death-vote or not.

A shrill whistle broke into the deliberations.

Its note sounded from the lips of a sentinel who stood on a rocky point that gave him a view of the white-alkali trail which ran from the little hunting settlement of whites on Lake Garry, known as Snake Basin and which twined over mountains, through vast forests, over wonderful rivers, and through beautiful canyons, until it reached Fort Keewatin, three hundred miles of desolation, so far as civilization was concerned, away.

The outlaws rushed to their arms with quick precision which showed they were well drilled to resist sudden attacks.

Horses seemed to slide forward from nowhere.

Men mounted in haste, and hardly had the sound of the shrill whistle ended when every man in the band was mounted and ready for the fray.

The moment that the whistle had sounded the personal messenger of Apache Tim had rushed out to the sentinel.

He had learned why the alarm was given.

The messenger was quick to tell of the discovery by the sentinel.

As soon as Apache Tim heard the news from the messenger a smile of bloodthirsty delight swept over the outlaw's face.

"We won't have time to vote just now, boys," Apache Tim cried. "Basil Tyler is comin' to his death. Big Jake, our sentinel, sends me word that the Mounted Policeman is coming up the trail."

"Shoot the coyote! Fill the policeman full of holes," shrieked the bandit mob.

"Come on, boys. We'll kill him now," shouted Apache Tim as he gave rein to his noble gray horse, a

mettlesome charger that tore toward the trail, bearing the outlaw leader on his back.

Directly behind Apache Tim streamed the bandits on the mission of bloody murder!

CHAPTER II.

THE WARNING.

"Spread out," ordered Apache Tim to his band, as soon as he struck the Fort Keewatin trail along which he expected to see Basil Tyler, the Royal North West Mounted Policeman, progressing.

"Some take the wood way and cut him off in the rear," yelled Wild Frank.

The outlaws spread out, leaving Frank and Tim alone.

Tim pulled his horse out of his stride and awaited the return of the band's messenger whom he knew would soon be back to tell him that the outlaws were entrenched.

Apache Tim had his band under good military discipline.

Fights with them meant victory because the obvious precautions of a band of fighting men was preserved.

Messengers from the different bodies of fighting units reported to the commander of all, and the result was that few of the fights of the Apache Tim gang were lost.

The men in the band knew also that the first step toward a victory was to obey a commander.

Thus, when Tim requested Wild Frank to hurry down the trail to watch for the arrival of Basil Tyler, he was met with instantaneous obedience.

Apache Tim then jumped from his horse, threw the bridle-reins forward over the animal's head in Cowboy fashion.

This was the North-West manner of hitching a horse.

The horse did not stir except to crop a mouthful of bunch-grass from the side of the trail.

"Hallo! Can you tell me where I am?"

A thin, piping voice, thus spoke right at the ears of Apache Tim in the very next second.

Tim whirled around.

His big magazine revolver was sticking to his hand with the same position with which he grasped it.

The action was the superb cat-like quickness with which the regular North-West gun-man "pulls his weepin."

In a kitten's eye-wink Apache Tim was "heeled."

But Tim hesitated to shoot.

The figure that strode toward him was one of the queerest he had ever seen.

It was the form of a rather undersized man.

He wore an antique dress.

A queer, old-fashioned, full bottomed coat fell to his knees.

It was plum-colored and heavily adorned with old fashioned bullion lace.

Knee-breeches with knee-buckles of gold, set with flashing gems, next attracted Apache Tim's eyes.

The breeches were apple-green in color.

Tightly fitting top boots of yellow leather, with red-tops, met the knee-breeches.

A pair of gold spurs with tiny wheel-like rowels attached stuck out straight from the extremely high heels the little man wore on his boots.

A black-velvet cocked-hat with a buff cockade surmounted the man's head.

The back part of his head was covered with a white wig which ended in a queue.

The white-wig had been pushed back from the man's face which was round shaven, yet bore a peculiar wax-like hue.

"What in thunder have I struck?" thought Apache Tim.

The thought stayed the bullet in his revolver, already cocked, from speeding on its death errand as the bandit pressed the trigger of his weapon.

"Hallow!" cried the thin, piping voice again. "Can you tell me where I am?"

Apache Tim was astonished.

"Now don't point your weapon at me," the little voice continued. "I am also armed and it would be unfair of me to take advantage of you, my man. I am a soldier by profession. I must not attack a civilian by all the rules of war."

"Haw! Haw! Haw! Apache Tim, needs no warning from a toy soldier," the outlaw roared. "He isn't afraid of a regiment of such men as you?"

"Sirrah!" piped the tiny figure, whose face grew red and whose eyes now seemed to be red-hot furnaces, "you are trying to insult me. But never mind, I will not allow you to anger me."

Tim noted that the figure wore a straight sword, with a gem-set hilt.

In his belt was an old-fashioned flint-lock pistol singled barreled and about as able to cope with the present day magazine, quick-firing heavy caliber revolver, as a child is with a giant.

"Haw! Haw! Haw!" roared Tim again, "you don't mean that you're thinkin' of attacking me with that toasting fork?"

The anger of the tiny figure seemed to be about at the boiling point.

"No! No!" the figure piped. "I will not allow you to anger me. I cannot take advantage of your inexperience with arms to meet you in dire combat. Sirrah! Do not vex me more. I can not stay here long. You are detaining a valiant officer of King George the Third—"

The figure took off its queer cocked hat and made a bow as it did so.

"God save King George the Third," the piping voice wailed.

Apache Tim drew back.

His revolver began to shake in the hand that had never trembled before in time of battle.

"King George the *Third*!" shouted Tim. "What are you givin' me? You mean King George the *Fifth*."

"Sirrah!" now screamed the tiny figure. "You are indeed insupportable. Draw and defend yourself."

Like a valorous sparrow the tiny man flashed his sword from its scabbard and took the approved attitude for fencing as prevailing in the year of our Lord, 1776.

Apache Tim's mouth opened.

His eyes grew bigger and bigger.

Then he burst into another roar of laughter.

The figure regarded him gravely.

"Sirrah! I see you have no sword," the voice added. "You could not fight me if you wished. Pshaw! My

temper ought not to have given way. You are only a civilian."

So saying the tiny man thrust his sword back into its scabbard and turned away from Apache Tim.

But Tim was not to be thrust aside with such scant ceremony.

"I beg your pardon," Tim said with the clumsy and ferocious politeness of a grizzly bear. "I meant no offence. But in this age we aren't used to seein' things—I mean men, like you come striding toward us, even way out here from civilization."

"Way out here? Why—I beg your pardon, sirrah! But, it seems to me we are at cross-purposes."

"It looks that way," dryly replied the outlaw.

"Now it may be well for me to tell you who I am."

"It may be."

"I am an officer of King George the Third, and I am able to pay you for directing me on my way to Ottawa. Here, sirrah! Here is something for your trouble."

The strange figure pulled out a sort of purse-bag and extracted a guinea from it.

He handed the coin to Tim.

Tim took the money with a mystified air.

He dropped it like a flash in the next second.

The money was red-hot.

But the guinea lay in plain sight on the ground.

Tim stooped down and examined it. It was coined in the reign of King George the Third, of England.

"Good Gracious!" whispered Tim, "this chap tried to give me money one hundred and thirty-five years out of date."

The figure was watching Tim shrewdly.

"Now, don't be afraid," it cried, "I know you trappers up here aren't used to much coin of our Gracious King, but about Ottawa the men aren't so squeamish. It is good coin, is that guinea. It will buy fardel for your fair lady, I am sure, or hippoeras for your own lips."

Tim staggered back against his horse.

The noble animal was trembling. It was covered with white lather. It was unquestionably frightened.

Tim felt the hair on his head rise.

"My regiment," the figure added, "is in Ottawa. I have been sent to the North-West on a mission—ahem—it was carrying certain despatches to the heads of our Indian allies. We may have to use them to put down that pirate renegade, George Washington, who is inciting the good American subjects of our Gracious King to revolt—well we shall hang Washington some day."

"He thinks he is back in the days before the War of American Independence. He doesn't know that the Revolutionary War is ended and a great nation lives where the cross of St. George used to wave."

Tim's hair began to stand up on the top of his head in earnest. He tried to smooth it down with his trembling hand. But it would not smooth down.

"Now, my man," the figure said, "if you are one of those men who are allied against law and order in this country—beware! This is a plain warning I am giving you. I will have no license practiced on our sovereign's frontier. King George the Third speaks through me. Do you understand?"

Apache Tim straightened up.

He glanced at the war-like little figure, war-like of an age that has long since passed away.

"I don't understand, who are you?" quavered the outlaw.

"Enough!" shouted the figure. "Enough! You bide this warning—death awaits you on the path you have taken!"

Apache Tim staggered back.

He clutched the reins of his horse with a frantic grip.

He turned to speak to the strange personality.

There was no quaintly attired officer clad in the uniform of the Revolutionary War to be seen.

"A ghost!" said Apache Tim. "I have my warning from the grave."

CHAPTER III.

A MODERN WOMAN.

"Hully Snakes! Look at that horse buck!"

Gale Morris, ranchman, hunter, plainsman, dead-shot gold-pro prospector, a perfect type of the modern soldier of fortune of the Far North West, cried these words to Basil Tyler, Sergeant in the Royal North-West Mounted Police.

Sergeant Tyler was making his "post" this year.

As the post was about one thousand five hundred miles long it took him some moons to patrol it.

Tyler was a fine looking, hearty, stocky, broad-shouldered fellow, with dark hair, and eyes, and a chin that told that he was pertinacious and also of a fighting disposition.

"Fighting Tyler," was what they called him all over the great Keewatin territory where there's something like half a million square miles and only about four thousand people to divide them among.

A couple of hundred miles between neighbors, therefore, was not an unusual thing.

A great waste of trackless wilds for the most part was the territory through which Tyler made his customary yearly patrol, and he rather enjoyed his life of adventure, toil and fighting.

But Tyler just now was gazing at a bay horse, a broncho of the valley of the Great Fish River.

The animal was bucking, as Gale Morris put it, "for all he was worth."

"If his bucking propensities make up his value, he is worth a lot of money," cried Tyler. "He is bucking splendidly."

The animal just then executed a new equine war dance.

He drew all his feet together in a bunch like a playful kitten. Then he arched his back as a kitten might, if a very malicious one, and staggered stiff-legged ahead, anon arching his back and trying to shoot his rider up over the brightly shining sun.

"The only trouble was that the rider would not take the journey.

The horse then heeled over on his fore-legs.

He delivered a vicious kick, which would have hit a man in the center of his neck if the man had been seven feet high. Also it would hit a man about at that spot if any man had been there.

Really, there was no man there nor within a good many hundred feet of the bucking horse.

As this did not dislodge his rider he tried a new one.

He side-jumped over a pile of wooden timber about

twice as high as he was and then snorting, blowing, glaring with his wicked white and bluish eyes started to do it all over again.

The animal whirled around next so fast that Basil had to close his eyes to keep from getting "dotty" in just watching the horse.

"That brute reminds me of the horse race described by a certain celebrated American author," cried Basil at length.

"What was the description?" queried Morris.

"The author said the Horse in question 'held the record for a mile and three quarters; only the animal took an unfair advantage. He left out the mile and did the three quarters.'"

There seemed to be all this time no diminution in the ferocious energy of the bucking broncho.

"That chap sits him pretty darned well," said Basil. "I'm going to get nearer to see the fellow ride. Gosh, he can ride a hoss all right."

Gale Morris smiled in a superior sort of way.

But he followed Basil nearer to the bucking animal.

"But thunder," cried Basil as he got nearer, "why, it isn't a man riding the brute at all—it's a girl!"

Gale grinned again in a very superior way.

"Yes. I knew it was a girl all the while," Gale said.

Just then the horse having bucked all its spunk out of itself and seeing that it could not possibly buck its rider from her saddle, remembered a very important engagement it had about three thousand miles away, and thinking it was going to take some time to negotiate the distance disappeared up the road with a speed about one jump behind a locomotive's best record.

Basil shaded his eyes from the sun and watched the horse until it disappeared around a forest-covered bluff and then he turned toward Gale.

"By thunder!" Basil ejaculated. "That girl can ride. My, isn't she a corker? And pretty? Gale, who is she?"

"Bill Ross is her father. Lives in the village, here of Snake Basin.

"Old Man Garry after whom this lake is named was her grand-father."

"Is her mother living?"

"Died about three years ago. Gal keeps house for her dad. Likely little gal at that. Good gal too. But say—she'd rather ride that bucking broncho than eat."

"Does she ride him often?"

"Not often. She tries to ride him oftener than she does. This is her lucky day, and I guess the hoss is a little off his feed. He don't seem to put no spunk into his bucking."

"What? Does the hoss perform that way every time the girl tries to ride him?"

"Oh yes. That way or worse. Mostly worse. I told you the hoss wasn't putting in his best licks."

Basil looked bewildered.

"Do you mean to tell me that hoss does this every time he is mounted?"

"Every time."

"Don't he never stop bucking?"

"Yes. After he has bucked about so long the girl lets him have his head. He runs a matter of four miles as keen as he can jump. Then——"

"Well, what then?"

"The brute calms down. After that you couldn't make him buck. He don't know what it is to buck. A child can ride him, and he is one of the very best riding

horses there is hereabouts. He's kind, easy going, full of speed and endurance——"

"Thanks! I don't want to buy the hoss. Why tell me of his qualities?"

"No great reason of course. But I suppose that you'd prefer to hear more about the hoss's rider than the hoss?"

"There's where you hit me hard. Tell me all you can about the girl. She is a peach and cream girl all right."

"Think so—but some peaches are mighty bitter."

"Yes. But never mind what 'some' are; tell me what this one is?"

"Did you ever see prettier brown eyes?"

"Not that I can remember."

"Did you ever see a neater shape?"

"Never."

"Did you ever see a more graceful girl?"

"Never."

"Did you ever see a bigger fool than you are?"

"Never—that is; say I guess you are right. I'll come down to earth now and you tell me all about that rider?"

"With pleasure. Her name is Edith Ross."

"Pretty name."

"Think so myself. She is Whiskey Bill Ross's only daughter."

"Hully Cats! Whiskey Bill's daughter! Poor girl! Father a drunkard. Isn't it a shame?"

"Nope."

"Why not?"

"Because Whiskey Bill isn't a drunkard."

"Isn't he? Then how did he get his name?"

"He is the rankest Pro-hi-bitionist there is in Keewatin territory."

"Whiskey Bill in the ranks of the Prohibs—say tell that to me over again just as slow as you can. I want to grasp it."

"You can. That's why they call him Whiskey Bill."

"Dissect it. I can't bolt it whole."

"They call him Whiskey Bill because he went to the Canadian Parliament and asked them to make the selling of whiskey in Keewatin territory to any one, white, red, or black, a hanging offense."

"A crank."

"Yep."

"What does he do?"

"Edits a newspaper—which no one reads except himself."

"Pretty expensive, isn't it?"

"Very. But Lord, he don't mind the expense."

"Is he rich?"

"Never had a dollar in the world. Never could earn a dollar if he starved."

"How does he pay the expenses of his paper?"

"He has a sister who married a millionaire whiskey distiller down in Kentucky. Distiller died. Left sister all his millions. Whiskey Bill Ross now taps his sister for cash on which to run his paper."

Tyler exploded.

"Say, isn't it funny. Sister gets cash from whiskey; now brother fights whiskey with sister's whiskey cash," Tyler said between his hearty bursts of laughter.

"It is funny," laughed Morris. "I can't help but laugh every time I think of it all."

"What kind of a looking man is Whiskey Bill?"

"Fat, fussy, important, pousy little chap. Thinks he looks like Napoleon the Great. Looks about as much like him as a coyote does like a wolf. Looks like an actor really. Smooth shaven. Pompous very."

"Hum! And his daughter?"

"Stunning, fine, hearty, ladylike, decent, nice, well educated girl. Ought to have had a better dad than Whiskey Bill. But seems to think him the finest man that ever lived."

Tyler was looking up the road as Morris stopped to take breath.

"She is coming back," Tyler announced after a critical inspection of the horizon. "And that brute is going right well, now. There isn't any buck left in him."

The rapidly advancing figure of Edith Ross showed that Basil was right.

The broncho was not on his mettle.

He came onward with a swinging stride, a beautiful long lope that carried the girl forward like the wind.

As she came rushing onward Basil Tyler thought that she was the prettiest creature he had ever seen in his life, as she sat straight astride her animal, her divided skirt not confining the free movements of her shapely limbs.

Her high tanned-leather riding boots set firm in the large wooden stirrups of her Mexican saddle with the high fore and aft peaks.

A twisted hair bridle led to a Spanish bit in the animal's mouth.

The wide soft hat, worn by the girl, was blown straight back from her head by the fast pace of her ride and she was a picture of health, and bright happiness as she came rushing through the village main, and practically the only street, which in fact was only a stretch of unpaved country road, along which a few wooden two and one storied buildings fronted.

Edith Ross rushed forward until just opposite the two watching young men.

Her gauntleted hand pulled her horse out of his stride.

The animal fell back almost to his haunches.

A touch of her spur sent the animal bounding to the side of Basil Tyler.

"Look to yourself, Basil Tyler," the girl cried in a silvery voice. "Apache Tim and his gang are after you! Get your guns ready!"

Before either Basil or Gale could ask a question Edith Ross was vanishing in the distance.

CHAPTER IV.

APACHE TIM SEES RED.

"In the name of all the saints wit are ye a seein?" Wild Frank asked this question of Apache Tim not ten minutes after the queer figure had disappeared down the trail in the direction of Fort Keewatin.

"Nuttin'," replied the outlaw chief quickly. "Say Frank, did you see anything as ye came up the trail?" the outlaw leader asked.

"See anything? Yep, I seen some jack rabbits, two coyote's a b'ar, an' I guess a ginerall assortmint o' game—why?"

"Did you meet a little chap, dressed in a faded old suit of clothes?"

"N-o-o. Didn't meet no humern feller."

"The man I mean had on a sort of Revolutionary uniform—the kind they wore in George Washington's day?"

"Never heern tell o' him. Did he live in these parts? He mount be one of them gold-prospectors over in Yukon territory. But I never heern the name about hyar."

In spite of his alarm, Wild Frank could not aid him. This Apache Tim saw in a moment.

In fact Wild Frank wouldn't have known a soldier dressed in the uniform last worn one-hundred and thirty-five years ago, if he had met the soldier himself.

But Apache Tim was determined to satisfy his own mind as to the identity of the strange personage who had warned him of trouble that was to appear in the outlaw's path.

So he continued to question Wild Frank.

"You must have seen the chap I allude to," Apache Tim went on. "He was a thin little fellow. He wore an old fashioned cocked hat."

"No? I disremember seein' any sich feller."

"He wore a full-bottomed skirt coat."

"Huh? Wot kinder a cot is thet?"

"And knee-breeches with buckles set in gems."

At the word "Gems" Wild Frank's eyes sparkled.

He knew about gems; that was part of his business.

"Say, Tim," Wild Frank added, "do you suppose—an' ye knows me pritty well, do ye'z suppose thet I'd let a feller wit *gems* on 'im git by me? Say Tim are ye gittin nutty?"

Apache Tim's face fell. He was getting anxious now.

"But Frank," he added. "Honest. You must hev seen this fellow. He started down the trail right from where you came not three minutes after he disappeared. He couldn't escape going by you—say, Frank, you must have seen him?"

There was so much energy in his words that Wild Frank looked at the outlaw leader with a queer expression on his face.

"Yer ain't bin a drinkin' hev ye, Tim?" Frank asked with a great show of consternation. "This gang's got trouble enough without havin' its leader cum down wit de delicious triangles."

"Naw," swore Tim.

"I'm dumbd glad ter hyar ut. This a havin' o' yar likker a settin' on yer stummick wrong ain't wot it's cracked up to be."

"No, my likker sits in me all right. In fact I ain't had a drink to-day."

"Hev one wit me—its bully good stuff. It killed me fadder. He was a good jedge o' whiskey."

With trembling hands Tim poured out a glass of the whiskey in a tiny cup that made the top of the flask when it was not in use.

Wild Frank watched him furtively but narrowly all during the operation of taking a drink.

"That's pritty good stuff," cried Frank as Tim shoved down a good stiff courage-reviver. "Now thet you've got yar booze inter yar tell me all erbout it, Tim."

"All about what?"

"All about what's eatin' year."

"Oh, there's nothing to tell."

"Now, don't ye gin me thet. I've known ye Tim every sense ye was a tenderfoot down Smoky Hill way. Ye cain't put nuttin' over on me by a bluffin' this way. Gin up."

Accordingly Tim, rather glad to get some one's opinion of the events that oppressed him so much, plunged into his strange story.

"You remember when we all separated in our chase for that Mounted policeman, Basil Tyler?"

"Shore."

"Then you remember that I asked you to rush up the trail and see if you could see the fellow?"

"Yass."

"While you were gone a tiny little chap, face like a wax-doll, came up here and tackled me."

"W-h-a-t?"

"Sure as you're a foot high. The chap wore an old fashioned uniform such as soldiers used to wear more than a hundred years ago."

"G'way."

"Sure as you're born! And he paid me in a guinea that bore the date of King George the Third's reign. An' the coin was hot when he handed it to me."

By this time Wild Frank's face was crimson from excitement.

"G'way," he cried. "Do you mean to tell me thet ye seen sich a feller?"

"I do."

"Imperssible. Ye moust er fallin a-sleep an generally dreamed ut."

"It was no dream."

"Then yar locoed. Yar plumb locoed."

"No, I'm not. I'm as sane as you arc."

"Man ye cayant be. Yar crazy, Tim an ye ain't in yar right mind nuther. Say, ye didn't see no sich thing ez thet yar feller. Ye jest naturally was a dreamin'."

"No, I wasn't. I saw that feller all right. I know when I see real things and when I see booze things, I've had my troubles with the Booze King, and I can tell which is real and which is Booze."

Wild Frank knew that when Apache Tim talked this way he was all in.

Wild Frank did not like to admit his conclusions but they were forced upon him irresistibly.

"Be Gosh!" Wild Frank cried, "thar ain't but one explanation to wot ye've seen Apache Tim. Say, I tink ye've seen a ghost!"

"A ghost?" shuddered Tim. "Yes, you and I have come to the same conclusion. That figure was a ghostly visitor to this world sent back from the grave to warn me that my days are numbered, and that Apache Tim's gang has got to go along with its leader. But Frank, don't ye tell any of the boys."

"Sure. But boy, I fear ye's right. Thet was a ghost ye seen. An' the Apache Tim gang hez gotter fight fer its life summin' harder ter beat then that thar mounted po-licemun."

A fierce expression drifted over Apache Tim's face.

"I was pretty cautious," Tim cried, "when the boys wanted to take a death-vote and do up that infernal copper this mornin'. I ain't so easy to-night. I'll kill him now the first chance I get. Come on. Call off the gang. This was a false alarm, but by Heaven I'll get Basil Tyler yet."

The outlaw chief turned and led his men back toward

the forest fastnesses where they had their dreadful dens.

CHAPTER V.

BASIL TYLER ASKS AN EXPLANATION.

"I ask your pardon for calling here without a formal introduction, but I must plead duty as my excuse."

Basil Tyler as he spoke these words again thought that Edith Ross was the prettiest girl he had ever seen.

Tyler had followed the girl to her home directly after she had given him her warning. He knew that he must do this, and it may be said that he was glad that his duty and his inclination in this case lay so close together.

Edith had surmised that Tyler would call upon her for an explanation to her words. She desired to aid the young man from the danger that she knew hung over his head, but she did not wish to tell him the sources of her information, and so there was some reticence in her attitude as she faced him at her father's door.

"Duty?" the girl cried, wishing to play for time so as to think just how much she ought to tell the young man. "Duty is such a queer thing. It so often makes us do what we do not want to do."

"In this case let me hope that duty and inclination go hand in hand in your mind as they do in mine."

"That is a gallant speech," cried Edith. "You have no idea how gallant a speech it was."

"Thank you for your good opinion of my placing words together so that they can be understood. But it was not to hear that I could or could not fill the compliment bill in your mind that I called. What I am anxious to know is as to the warning you gave me this afternoon."

"I know."

"Well, can you gratify my curiosity?"

"Then the fact that I wished to save your life you esteem mere curiosity?"

"Not at all. In fact I did not mean it that way at all. What I meant was that I am not anxious to be assassinated. I also am not anxious to be impertinent. But I must really impress upon you the fact that I am here in my official position as a member of the Royal North-West Mounted Police and I must beg of you to shed more light on what you said to-day."

"How can I shed more light?"

"Why can you not?"

"It seems to me that my warning was enlightening enough. I told you to beware of Apache Tim's outlaw band."

"You did."

"I added that they were trying to kill you."

"Possibly not exactly in those words but the implication that such was the desire of our bandit foe, was what I understood."

"If you did, you understood the matter exactly as I wished you to."

"Thank you."

"You need not thank me. It was as much my duty to warn you that your life was in danger at the hands of the outlaws who for years have terrorized Lake Garry and all along the country watered by Great Fish

River, as it was yours to come here and try and get me to further enlighten you."

"Thank you."

The two young people, who felt intuitively that their respective fates were hereafter to be strangely commingled, mused for a space.

Then Edith broke the silence.

"I want to help you all I can," she said. "I know you will believe me on that point, will you not?"

"I will," warmly replied Basil.

"But I am in a difficult position."

"I am sorry to hear that."

"You see the information I have was received in a rather confidential manner."

"Oh, it was?"

"Yes."

"You therefore do not wish to tell me anything further?"

"Oh, not at all that way I assure you. In fact I am very anxious to tell you all I can. But you see, I must try and not compromise others."

"I can readily appreciate your position."

"Now that you do I will say that I am willing to answer any question you may ask, only I reserve the right to answer in case I feel that I ought not to do so."

"That right I yield to you absolutely. But now that we understand each other may I question?"

"I would rather not have you put it in such a broad light."

"Let me——"

"No! No! I would rather tell you all that I feel justified in a breath, now that I have come to review the entire situation in all its lights!"

"Very well. I will let the matter rest there."

"First let me say that the Apache Tim band of outlaws are planning to kill you at the first chance they may get."

"That statement adds nothing to what you have already told me."

"They now are in their den on the shore of Great Fish River and they meditate a descent upon this village of Snake Basin if they are not able to lure you to their den."

"Whew! That would mean a lot of dead people besides me?"

"It would."

"How do you know this fact?"

"Now I can not tell you. In fact I may have been foolish in telling you but I thought it was my duty to do so."

Tyler's face was grave with teeming thoughts.

"I wish you would tell me how you secured your information," the young man finally said.

"Only can I go this far," replied Edith. "The information comes from my father who is a newspaper man."

"Oh, ho!"

"Father learned the news."

"But why did he not print such a valuable piece of news in his paper?"

When Edith had controlled the merriment that her companion's words excited she continued:

"You do not know father," she cried. "Father doesn't allow news to go into his paper."

"Eh?"

"True, strange as it may seem. Father knows a lot of news but he never, never lets it see the light of

day. In fact he suppresses anything that could be called news."

"But, my dear girl," expostulated Tyler. "In this case he is in a position to do a public service. The publication of a warning will be possibly the cause of an organized resistance in the village to the descent of the outlaw band."

"I know. Father is very willing to act for the public, to protect the public his way, but not in their way."

"That is your father is willing to aid the public along the lines he thinks the public ought to go."

"Precisely."

"In this case he don't think the public ought to go along any lines——"

"But prohibition."

Tyler thought of the big "snifter" he had that morning.

"Then the reason you can not divulge the sources of the news you have given me is because it affects your father."

"That is it. Father gathered the news in his daily round of newspaper work. If the outlaws knew that he had divulged this information, you know what would be father's fate?"

"Apache Tim and his gang would kill him and you."

"That would probably be it."

"I see your point of view. I think you are correct in the position you take. I will ask no more questions. Only it does seem to me that the danger in which the hamlet of Snake Basin is it ought not to have been weighed against your father's views, and the fact suppressed in his paper."

"Oh, Mr. Tyler, you don't know father. He would rather lose all my aunt's money on his paper than step back one inch from his views—and after all I think he has a perfect right to do with his own, what he wishes. It's no one's business if he don't tell all he knows in his paper, and if as a result half of this fair village dies, why what's the odds?"

"No odds at all, except that some people might criticize an attitude that did not give them warning of impending danger—however, the only thing for me to do is quietly to organize a force to meet the invading bandits. Do you really think they will raid this town?"

"You don't know Apache Tim, very well, I see. He would raid any town on the map if he thought there was a chance to get away with it. He would take long chances that he could get away with it," replied Edith.

"Right gal! Right!"

A gruff voice howled these words.

Tyler reached for his gun.

But he was too late.

A gaunt figure brought a rifle butt down upon the unfortunate head of the young man.

It was a felon blow.

Edith screamed.

She saw dark forms pour about her from every direction.

Rough hands seized her.

A gag was thrust into her mouth.

Her eyes were blindfolded.

The last thing the frightened girl saw was the face of Basil Tyler covered with blood, upturned to the sky.

Leaning over the bleeding, prostrate form was the bulky shape of the outlaw, Apache Tim.

"Corraled!" the bandit shouted. "We have got them both, boys. Now mount and ride fast! Sling that girl up on a horse you, Wild Frank. Chuck that infernal policeman over that lead horse. Now charge!"

The outlaws whirled off down the street of the hamlet shooting on all sides.

Their oaths, their shots, their fierce dash and force frightened the trembling inhabitants of the hamlet to the verge of madness.

"I got one feller there," shouted Apache Tim, as he sent a shot from his revolver at a man's head that appeared, white and frightened at a window.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The fifty men who rode like devils from the lower world by the side of Apache Tim added their shots to those of the leader.

Men fell here and there in the hamlet, dead or grievously wounded.

The outlaws had soon "*held up*" the hamlet of "*Snake Basin*," and were rushing away toward their forest den with the flower of the village and the brave young policeman, prisoners of their reckless deed.

CHAPTER VI.

GALE MORRIS FINDS HIMSELF.

The outlaws had gone hardly a mile from the scene of their desperate raid when Gale Morris was on the trail bound to rescue the pretty young girl, Edith Ross, and the young sergeant of the Mounted Police force, Basil Tyler.

Morris had not waited to rouse a posse among the frightened townsmen. He had figured that a party of people, several hundred in number, who had not "*sand*" enough to resist the "*shootin-up*" of their town by a lot of bandits, would not be of much use to him in an attempt to aid two unfortunate prisoners.

He also knew that there was not much time to waste in meeting up with the prisoners.

The fate of the girl was plain.

She would become the wife of one of the outlaws as soon as the scant ceremonies of an Indian marriage could be rushed through.

The fate of Basil Tyler was equally certain.

The outlaws would kill him immediately, and as there was a good sprinkling of Indians in the Apache Tim band, and Tim himself was a half-breed, Morris knew that Tyler's death would be one that would come only after tortures that made his blood run cold to think of.

When the first shot had snapped its way to his ears, as the outlaws started down the one long straggling street of the village, whooping, shooting, yelling wild oaths, and spurring and beating their horses into a frenzy, Morris had been on his way to his cabin, a rough little building made of hewn logs built on the side of a steep mountain, and reached by a narrow trail.

Here it was that the "*Blue Wing*" silver mine was located.

Morris was confident that the mine was going to

make him a millionaire some day.

This was when he got his "main shaft" down a thousand feet where he figured the land was to be tapped.

However, the date for the arrival of the fortune was not even fixed in the mind of Morris.

He had been more than a year blasting, picking, pecking, working, with another man, his "pardner", and they had managed to get their shaft down fifty feet.

Just when they would get the other 950 feet of the shaft "down" was a problem; but until they did they knew their fortune was buried deep in the earth.

However, the two men felt that time was all they needed and having plenty of that and to spare in the mountain fastness about them, they pegged away hoping some day to get "to the lead."

They lived by trapping meanwhile.

A few days each week gave them fur peltries enough to keep them in food for a month. The only great expense they had being the purchase of blasting powder; and so the "Blue Wing" was slowly "being developed."

There is such a splendid gamble in the mining game.

As the shots came to his ears, Morris knew that there was something up in the village of an untoward nature.

The explosion of a fire-arm as one gun-man snuffed out the light of another was not an unusual thing to hear.

But when the shots came in fierce sequence, Morris knew that there was something out of the ordinary happening in the village.

"Tim the Apache, is raiding the town," was the first thought that flashed through Gale Morris' mind.

He was right of course.

The accuracy of his judgment probably came from the manner of living in the world in which he held his niche; to have a band of outlaws "shoot-up" a village wasn't an extraordinary proceeding in the far North-West.

It was an ordinary episode, just extraordinary to wake a man up.

So Morris turned his horse back at the best speed of the animal hustled back to Snake Basin.

He found the houses looking as if they were the scene of an earthquake.

The outlaws had shot out pretty nearly every window light in the town.

There were half a dozen wounded men vainly trying to staunch the blood from various injuries, assisted by frightened women, who like rabbits came out of their burrows as soon as the bandits left the town.

A man sprawled on the steps of the grocery store and post-office.

He was no longer one of the leading citizens of the town; he was now only the corpse of he who had been a leading citizen.

Other still forms lay further down the street.

One of them was Ferdinand Billings, in charge of the North-West Express office and bank which had its headquarters at Fort Churchill on Hudson Bay.

He was stone dead.

The outlaws in the first rush into town had been split up into two parties.

One of them had shot and killed Billings in the office of the bank, had then blown open the safe with dynamite, and had taken all of the money in it, leaving the

wrecked safe and its dead protector as an object lesson to the depredations of outlaws of the North-West.

"A regular outlaw raid," thought Morris. "No one gang, even the famous Jesse James gang of bandits that used to terrorize the middle West, could have turned this trick slicker."

He saw directly that while the first band "shot the safe" the second band "shot up" the town and got the prisoners.

"Well! Well! Well!" said Morris to himself, yet half aloud. "They've sure done a good job."

"Say, they's did didern't theys," drawled a voice in the ears of Morris.

Morris looked behind him.

There stood Sleepy George Potter.

Sleepy George was just what his name denominated.

He was a man past sixty who had slept away his past, was sleeping away his present, and bid fair to sleep away his future.

That is to say he was not absolutely asleep all the time in the flesh; only in his brains.

"George," Morris was wont to say, "you are asleep when your eyes are most open."

That tells the entire history of the amiable old man, who could trap with the best of them, out-shoot most men and who was always ready to help some other fellow; but all his work never ended in his helping himself in the slightest degree.

A failure?

It's hard to judge.

"Well, well, George," cried Morris. "What are you doing here?"

"Wall, wall, Gale Morris whot be ye doing hyar?" came the swift reply from the old trapper.

"There's been a raid."

"Hu. Hu."

"And there's some dead men about the village."

"Shore. But we both hev seen dead men afore."

"Right. But there's worse than dead men behind this raid."

"How?"

"You know Edith Ross?"

"Know Edie? Wall, you bet I does."

"She's a prisoner among the bandits."

"Huh."

"A prisoner among the bandits."

Sleepy George betrayed no great surprise. It took time for a fact to percolate through his brain.

While the amiable trapper was trying to solve the words of Morris, the latter went on as usual to tell the rest of his sad story.

"Then too," Morris added, "there's a likely young friend of mine named Basil Tyler, here for awhile on business of the Royal North-West Mounted Police, who was made a prisoner at the same time as Edith Ross."

"I know the boy. He's a neat lookin' young lad. Wall, wall! So Edie Ross is a prisoner—whose band was it? Was it Apache Tim's?"

"Yes."

"I'm dead sorry fer her. Say, she ain't the kinder girl thet will be satisfied wit a outlaw husband. Wall! I wonder wot her dad'll think now. He had no call ter fergitt his da'ter in his love for them Proo-hi-bitioners."

"That's the trouble with some philanthropists, they are so busy philanizing about their neighbors that they

can't attend to the average safety of their own children."

"I ain't much o' a reader but I reads a ar-ti-cle a good manny yars ergo that hits yar pint."

"What was the article about? A recapitulation of any story that you have read, by you, Sleepy George, is worth a lot to listen to."

"Wal—'twas this a way. A baby was found in a Lunnon' street."

"Deserted?"

"Sure."

"Well what became of this deserted baby?"

"Et was taken ter a horspital an' arter a bit er lot o' philanthro—oh, what dy ye call em—philanthropic societies an' chari-tee-ble societies was sint fer for ter git some plan up ter support the baby an' wen it gits older ter give it book-larnin' ernough so it cud git its livin' in this yar hard wold."

"A good plan. That is why so many of those charitable and philanthropical institutions are incorporated and men who are rich give much money to them and rich women die and leave them more money—a grand good plan."

"Yass. I heern tell o' them places. Wall, ter git on. Th' baby was some prob-leem ter all them societies."

"Why?"

"Some on um culdn't do nothin' fer the kid cause it want known as ter what bee-lief its parents was in—the Methody could do notin' less thay's knew the kid's dad or ma was a Methody. Them 'piscopalians was in the same boat. They Hebrews, an' the Congree-gationalists, and the U-nee-varsalists, the Catholics an' all the rest uv the church societies could get nowhar 'cept te chaw the rag over the matter. They want notin' they could do they says, till some o' the doct-ree-nul pints was cleared up about the baby."

"It then got down to the phil—you know—people. They hed thar trubbles frum the start. They was some wanted the baby ter be edicuted fer a Socieel Settl'munt worker. Thar was others that wanted the baby ter grow up ter be an Uplifter o' mankind—wall they was trouble thar."

"What happened?"

"Bimeby they's all gotter settlemnts. It was all fixed jest how that thar baby was to be brung up, an' wot it was ter do wen it gits up."

"Well, that was nice. Child all right then?"

"Arter it was all settled, they's found that the baby had starved ter death. No one hed seen to it thet the baby gits milk right then an' thar. They was all fer-gittin that the likeliest babby hez ter eat."

"Ho! Ho! Ho!" laughed Morris, "what a fine story. Say, it's great. But what you want me to do I suppose, Sleepy George, is to apply some of the ideas to Whiskey Bill Ross, Edith's father, eh?"

"Now I ain sayin' nuttin'. Ye does yer own figgerin'. All I kin say is inth while we await fer the posse ter form, while we wait fer some one ter decide erbout gitting them prissiners free, thet thar'll be 'nother dead baby done yer see."

Rebuked, Gale Morris jumped into his wits and on his horse with the greatest possible celerity.

"Sleepy George," he cried, "By thunder, I guess we have all been sizing your checks up wrong here! You hold a higher stack than we thought you did. George, you are a philosopher."

"Now Gale," Sleepy George replied, "ye look ter yar weepins an' let pheel-o-sphy git ter Hades. We ain't er going ter phee-los much this hyar trip but we are goin' to do a heap lot o' shootin' 'fore we gits back. Look ter yar weepins boy. There's a time fer talkin' an' a time fer shootin'—an' in this yar game we are beyon' the talkin' game."

The two men rode on in silence at a sharp lope.

Sleepy George, little, strong, active, and hardy, but a mere mite beside the fine bulk of Gale Morris, sat his horse like a monkey.

Morris on his slinging big steed towered over the Indian pony bestrode by Sleepy George.

Strange as it may seem although each horse was made to do its best, the two animals were about on a par in covering distances.

They loped around a turn in the trail.

The sharp eyes of Sleepy George saw something there lying in the trail.

It was darkish, yet had yellow trimmings.

Sleepy George pulled hard on his horse. The pony stopped and danced up and down in its anxiety to dart ahead again.

Morris adopted the same course with his big animal and the two horses spun round and round like a couple of tops.

At last they were headed for the something that lay still in the middle of the road.

It required much urging to get the trembling, frightened horse to approach the strange thing lying in the trail.

"It looks like a man," cried Morris.

"Ef it is hee's dead or wounded. But tenny rate git yar guns reddy."

Morris obeyed.

The two men cautiously urged their horses toward the prostrate thing!

CHAPTER VII.

IN PERIL.

Edith Ross managed to keep her wits about her in spite of her peril when Apache Tim and his outlaw band bore her away from Snake Basin at top speed.

She knew that the raid she had warned Basil Tyler against had been made and that she was a prisoner and that Basil was also, if alive, a prisoner near her somewhere in the mass of running horses, that darted so swiftly away.

Edith quietly put her hand along her waist, at her back.

Underneath her dress she felt the hilt of her revolver. Her knife also she knew lay alongside of the gun.

"If they don't search me at least I'm heeled," the girl thought.

An Eastern woman in a time of danger like this would have felt for her handkerchief.

But this Western girl felt for her gun.

Training, after all, goes for a good deal.

Edith tried to listen to what was going on around her, but she could only catch fragments of conversation.

She knew that she had been seated astride of a horse and her limbs had been tied to the saddle.

Her arms had been crossed behind her.

Then they had been tied at the wrists.

With a great stick crowding open her mouth and tied back of her neck and with her hands and limbs confined it would seem that she had no possible avenue of escape.

Edith herself felt the chances were against it.

But she was determined to "do or die," and that was a good deal.

Edith like most—in fact all—North-West girls knew that the best thing to defend oneself with was a good revolver.

The girl instead of carrying one in her pocket, as many Western girls do, as well as far North-Western, had a cunningly contrived pocket fitted in her gown at the back of her dress.

The revolver, her hand which she managed to lift enough to make the fact a surety, was swinging down the girl's back between her shoulders, and she knew that for some minutes after she had got the weapon in her hands she was free.

"If I can't pump a slew of lead into these bandits before they go very far with this child," cried the girl in her heart, "it's because I can't get to my gun."

As she thought this fact over she felt her horse pulled sharply forward and from the harsh voice of Apache Tim, which was bellowing orders at his band, she knew that she was now in the van of the bandits.

Now and then Edith heard the hoarse tones of Wild Frank.

Soon, the running speed of the horses in the band slowed to a lope, and then to a walk.

"No use of killin' our horses," shouted Apache Tim back to his following band. "There isn't any one in Snake Basin with sense enough to follow us here."

"Er san' ernough ter do it at thet?" bellowed Wild Frank. "Save yar cattle boys."

The outlaws did as they were bid.

The moment the horses were reduced to a smart walk Edith felt her heart almost stop beating, while a deathly faintness came to her quickly.

The two outlaws, Apache Tim and Wild Frank, began calmly talking over her fate.

"What ye goin' ter do with this gal hyar?" asked Wild Frank.

"Oh, she's a likely critter. I'm going to send for an Indian clergyman to-morrow and get her married to me. I ain't had as good a wife as she in a long spell."

"Haw! Haw! What do you do with the heft o' yer wives?"

"Most all o' 'em ar buried up back of the camp. I don't seem to have no luck with wives. They all sicken and die soon as I marry them."

"Wall, ef I was a gal and had ter call ye hubby I'd want'er die."

Poor Edith could hear the two bandits chuckle and laugh as if their horrible plan for her future was not being overheard by her.

"Oh, you fearful man," the poor distressed girl thought. "I'll put one of the bullets in my revolver through my own head before I marry that awful thug. But before I do I'll send Apache Tim ahead of me to tell the ghosts in the other world that I am coming after him."

There was one thing about Edith Ross and that was she wasn't afraid to die.

There was another thing, that Apache Tim did not take into account.

Edith Ross knew how to shoot her revolver!

The outlaws were, meanwhile, continuing their conversation.

"Watcher goin' 'ter do wit that air Mounted Policeman?"

A horrid oath disgraced the clear atmosphere.

It burst from the lips of Apache Tim.

"I'm ergoin' ter"—and the disgusting oaths followed each other fast and fierce as the bandit told what he was going to do with Basil Tyler.

Basil, although Edith did not know it, was just arousing himself from the senseless state that the blow upon his head, delivered by Wild Frank, had caused.

The policeman was sick and faint, and his head ached horribly.

If he had not happened to have just put on his wide-felt hat at the moment the butt of Wild Frank, the outlaw's rifle came down on his head, the Mounted Policeman's skull would have been shivered by the terrible blow dealt him.

He was saved by the protection of the hat, and although an ugly jagged wound was cut across his head, which bled freely, and would leave a scar for life, Basil was far from being a dead man.

His out-door life, which every one who wishes to accomplish great deeds of adventure must follow, had done much for his strength.

He could stand a blow owing to his free wild life of unfettered silence that would have killed an ordinary man.

Basil, although he rocked in the saddle, managed to hang on to his horse.

The bandits had neglected him in the matter of confining him except that they had tied his feet to his saddle and his hands to his sides.

He was not gagged.

When he had been hoisted on the horse Wild Frank had howled out that "thar warn't no use er gaggin' thet feller, fer my rifle gagg'd him so he wont talk fer a month."

The outlaws even in the stress of their hold-up of Snake Basin had howled at the rough joke, for most every one had seen the terrible blow with which Wild Frank had struck Basil Tyler to the ground.

"Man," cried one of the bandits, "ye hit thet chap a blow that left a dent on his cocoanut for the rest o' his natteral life."

The fact that Basil was not gagged was one that he was thankful for.

He could talk.

He also felt that now darkness was coming, that there was some hope of a rescue; or possibly an escape.

He managed to imperceptibly urge his horse a trifle ahead of the ruck of animals around him.

This was not hard to do as all the bandits were now walking their cattle, every horse being now pretty well blown by the rapidity of the race into Snake Basin and the race out of the hamlet, at the best speed each animal could put forward.

It was evident that when Basil's horse began to forge ahead that the outlaws simply thought that his animal was a faster walker than the other horses surrounding the young Mounted Policeman.

Soon this scheme got Basil alongside of a figure that he thought was that of Apache Tim.

Just what Basil thought he could do alongside of the outlaw chief he did not know.

But he felt impelled by some higher power to thus negotiate the distance.

He stooped down, pretending great faintness, and tried to thus peer up at the figure he saw riding ahead.

It was hard for him to do this as the blood from the scalp where he had been struck now ran down over his eyes, and almost blinded him.

The blood began flowing again with each movement, but Basil was game, and managed after several efforts to see who it was riding beside him.

As the knowledge entered his brain he just managed to escape a cry of joy.

Basil Tyler knew that it was not the bandit chief Apache Tim, who was riding there ahead of him, but it was Edith Ross, the one person in all the world whom he was anxious to hear from or see.

Next the question of communication became uppermost.

By swaying about in his saddle as if from weakness, Basil managed to see that the outlaws were in force behind him, and that ahead first rode Apache Tim, who was talking with Wild Frank.

A lariat was twined in the halter of the horse Edith rode and the other end was tied to Apache Tim's saddle.

This so plainly showed that the girl was prisoner to the bandit chief alone, and not to the gang, that Basil felt the red-blood course through his veins and he felt strong enough to over-turn the world.

"Never!" he whispered to himself. "Not while I have an ounce of blood in my veins shall Edith Ross grace the tent of that unspeakable outlaw, Apache Tim, as his bride."

Just then the entire outlaw cavalcade entered the forest which for some miles now had been trying to eat up the trail along which the party passed.

The darkness now was almost as intense as midnight.

"Now is my chance," muttered Basil.

He warily urged his horse forward.

It edged ahead.

At length it was directly alongside of Edith Ross.

"Courage," whispered Basil, in as low a tone as he conjectured would carry to the ears of Edith and yet be unheard by the outlaws.

The second he had spoken Basil let his horse drift back again to the ruck of beasts behind him.

He was satisfied.

He had noticed the violent start that Edith had given when she heard his whispered word.

Indeed, Edith, whose heart was as water within her bosom, when the word was spoken by Basil, had needed to hear it. She had almost given up hope but now, there came a glow of renewed energy.

"Thank God!" the girl thought. "Basil Tyler is alive. He knows my terrible plight. Possibly he may hit upon a plan to save his life and mine."

But when Edith thought of the bandits surrounding her, which she knew must be the bulk of Apache Tim's force, and from the tramping of many horses showed was a large one, the girl's heart died within her.

"Ah," she thought. "There is no hope. I must

either wed Apache Tim or I must escape him by my self-murder."

Tears started to the girl's eyes.

It was a dreadful fate to think upon; tied for life to the worst bandit in Keewatin territory if she lived; a grave if she wished to escape her dreadful fate.

"And judging the words of the outlaws, if I accept my fate and marry Apache Tim, I'm bound to join the dead and silent colony where the 'heft o' Apache Tim's wives' are buried. He is worse than blood-thirsty Blue Beard!"

Edith who had the saving gift of humor in her make-up could not help a smile from rippling over her face, although its beautiful lines were somewhat ruined by the fact that the girl's face was distorted by the gag within her mouth.

Basil Tyler for his part was equally overjoyed.

"If I can't get that girl away from the clutches of these bandits," he thought, "I can at least die with her here—not a bit of harm shall come to a hair of her head while I am here."

As for the bandits, the men were smiling and happy.

The leaders were equally so.

"Say boys, this year th' boss clean-up this hyar gang hed in yars," cried Walla Walla Cy Mitchell. "Say, ef thar a cent thar's fifty thousan' dollars in gol' dust in that thar safe."

"An' thar was as much more in bank bills en' coins," added Poker Tom Hudson, another bandit of reputation in the gentle art of gambling.

"Ter say nuttin' o' dimuns. Say, how d'ye suppose dimuns came out hyar in thet thar safe?" returned Walla Walla Cy.

"Some one hocked 'em. Thar's a lot o' rich Easterners ouden hyar thet hez ter hock their dimuns ter git home agin'. This yar minin' game is mostly a game wot ef ye hits it ye hits it hard, en if ye don't ye hez gotter hock yer stuff et the nearest pawn-shop."

A roar of applause came from the other outlaws.

They all knew what a pawn-shop was.

It's funny but even on the frontiers the pawn-shop gets there ahead of the saloon—and it has to go some to beat out the saloon at that.

Between the two, however, there isn't much more chance for a man in the frontier towns than there is in the big cities of the country!

Anyway you look at it the ready-reckoner gets your wad.

These thoughts rushed through Basil's head as he heard the outlaws talking about him.

"Wall," cried Walla Walla Cy, "et's goin' ter be a welcum thing this yar hole-up. We ain't had no turkey this summer."

"We hez hed a good manny feathers," cried Poker Tom Hudson. "Feathers sorter git in me teeth, ye know. I ain't so partial ter feathers—"

"'Cept ye has 'em in a feather-bed," replied Walla Walla. "Ef thar's anythin' nicer fer a weary outlaw ter rest hisself on then a good feather bed I don't know watter it."

"Yar right. I'd like ter say 'Now I lay me down ter sleep' right now," jeered Walla Walla's *vis-à-vis*, a big outlaw known as Long Jack, o' Texas.

"Et ain't fur now. But ye will hev ter fix up yar hoss 'fore ye goes ter yar feather-bed this night, eh?"

Walla Walla grinned as he spoke.

The bandits, Basil could see, were now nearly to their camp.

Except that it was secreted in the depths of the forest, far from any human habitation in a trackless wilderness of which he knew nothing, and with wild beasts on all sides ready to attack him even if he escaped, alone, or with Edith, Basil well knew.

He also knew that he would not attempt to escape without Edith.

Basil groaned.

A figure leaned over to him from the right. He knew it was not Edith and Basil drew back to try and escape an assassin blow.

But none came.

Instead Basil Tyler heard his own word flung back at him.

"Courage!" the voice said.

Basil roused himself.

"Who spoke then? Who dares speak of courage in this horrible den of outlaws?" Basil whispered.

Not a sound came back to his strained ears. All was silence, except that to Basil's tortured senses there seemed to be the word "courage" coming to him again upon the night wind that beat upon his fevered brow.

CHAPTER IX.

"DEATH TO THE MOUNTED POLICEMAN!"

No face ever bore a more demon-like expression than that of the outlaw leader, Apache Tim, the next evening when he had called the entire bandit force together, for the purpose of deciding what course to take in the case of the Mounted Policeman.

"Boys," shrieked the guerilla chief, "I stopped ye all yesterday. I didn't want ye to kill this Basil Tyler, the young Royal North-West Mounted Policeman. I thought it poor policy. But since then things have changed. We have shot-up Snake Basin."

"Beccher life, en we shot her up good," yelled Wild Frank.

"Hurrah!" cried the bandits. "We sure did."

"En we got a darned fine lot o' plun-der," shrieked Walla Walla Cy.

"Hurrah!" again howled the bandits.

"You're the goods, Apache Tim," shouted Poker Tom Hudson. "We'll stan' by ye ter the limit."

The guerilla chief looked grim and sober.

"You bet, you'll have to stand by me, and by every man here," he croaked. "We have pulled off something that will make trouble for us all."

"How?" cried the band almost in unison.

"We have done a lot of shootin' and cuttin' and robbin' and general outlaw holdin's up, since we have been together boys," added Apache Tim, "but we ain't been really hard up agin' the law before."

"Wot's th' matter witchaw?" sneered Walla Walla Cy at this point.

"Nothing," returned the outlaw chief. "I'm just pointing out that we are in a position of extreme danger."

"How de ye make thet out?" growled Wild Frank.

"The fact that we have held up Snake Basin and shot up the town, an' killed several people more or

less, and wounded others, and robbed the biggest safe in the country hereabouts of a large amount of gold dust, diamonds bank bills and general treasure means that there's going to be a hot hunt for us."

Several of the bandits looked grave.

"This shootin'-up of that village lifts us in a second from a common crime, for we know it's a crime we have committed, but it puts us in a class that up to this time has been held by such men as Jesse James, Frank James, his brother, or Cole Younger. These men were bandits of fame. Boys, that hold-up has made Apache Tim and his gang famous forever in the great North-West."

"Hurrah!" howled the outlaws.

"Wot is 'e a givin' us this yar stump-speech fer?" yelled Poker Tom to his gang.

The right of free speech was unquestioned in this camp of thugs.

The position of chief was held only by popular vote.

When a man led the Apache Tim gang he led it by force of his bloody deeds; but he only held it at pleasure of his associates, and was liable to be deposed at any time by vote.

He also had no more interest in the loot of the band than any other member of it.

It was share and share alike, and while Apache Tim had the power to maintain his personal authority in the band by the prowess of his gun, he had "to beat the other man to his gun," the main key-note for existence in the North-West at any point.

The outlaws, therefore, required of their leader a strict stewardship of his acts.

They reserved the right to criticise all that Apache Tim did, while at the same time obeying him, knowing that one man alone must give orders in any community; too many men giving orders ends in anarchy.

"No it's not a stump-speech," answered Apache Tim, to the remark of Poker Tom Hudson. "It's a warning—that's all."

"A warnin'?" cried Long Jack o' Texas. "I ain't on. Put us wise."

Wild Frank muttered to Apache Tim that he had better give it to the gang, strong, which Tim proceeded to do.

"You chaps mean well," Apache Tim continued, "but now it's time to find a chance to pull your stage coach."

"What," roared the bandits.

"Just that," replied Apache Tim.

Even Wild Frank was astonished.

"Yep. It's time to quit," continued Apache Tim. "We are at the end of our rope. The clean up in the Snake Basin Hold-Up is considerable."

"Wot does it tot up ter?" surlily said Walla Walla Cy.

"About ten thousand dollars for each man in this band, share and share alike as we always have done."

"That's good money."

"But it's our last money."

"Don't see how yez meeks thet out," put in Long Jack o' Texas.

"I make it out all right. I make it out because there's not going to be any more raids made by Apache Tim's gang."

"Come off."

"Yar locoed."

"Yar tryin' to thrun us deown."

These were a few of the surly remarks the outlaw band hurled at Apache Tim.

But through it all he was unmoved.

"Don't you fellers git wrathy," Apache Tim cried. "I'm just givin' ye cold facts. I'm not throwing ye down. I'm not deserting you in the slightest degree. There's no use talking this game's busted. Turn up the dealin' box. Bank's broke."

As every man had toyed in the palace of Old King Faro, there was little doubt that all understood.

For the uninitiated it might be as well to say that when the "bank" or the dealer, who is always the banker, in a game of faro, has lost all his cash he turns "the dealing box" from which he deals the cards for the gamblers to bet on, bottom side up; this shows the bank is "broke."

"Do yar think a bank-roll o' ten thou' per man, is 'bank-broke' talk?" cried Wild Frank.

"Suttin' my boy, it's not. But it means that we have been up agin' the big game at last. Every man, woman and child we have *held up at Snake Basin* will cry for our blood. There isn't a blessed Mounted Policeman in the great North-West that wont be rushed to Snake Basin to get even with us. They'll hunt, harry and kill us off if we stay here to be hunted, harried and killed—I for one won't. This gang so fer as Apache Tim is concerned is without a leader after to-night. I came from the old Smoky Hill route, boys, an' I'm going ter pull *my* stage-coach right back to them happy hunting grounds."

"You leave band? You tr-r-aitor," cried Teeke, the Indian.

Teeke stood about two feet from Apache Tim as he spoke.

Tim's arm went up.

His fist shot out.

Crunch!

That was the sound the blow made when it struck Teeke in the mouth.

The Indian turned a complete somersault.

His head struck the ground some seconds ahead of his heels.

A fairer "knock-out" never was scored.

A gasp ran round the outlaw circle.

The reddish-brown spots were about to jump out of the outlaw's chief's eyes.

His anger was near the boiling point.

But he calmed a great deal when the gang burst into a roar of applause.

"Holy Cats!" cried Poker Tom Hudson. "Wasn't that a beaut' knock-out?"

"Never seen nuttin' done better," snickered Walla Walla Cy. "Thet Injun sartin was hit right whar he lives."

Teeke meanwhile had come to himself.

At first his hand was seeking his revolver.

But when he heard the compliments that were showered upon Apache Tim for hitting him, the Indian wriggled away in true Indian style. He wasn't looking for any more trouble than he was in.

He spat teeth and blood all the way.

But he made no complaint.

Indian like he wallowed in his desire for revenge on Apache Tim.

"Well, boys," added Tim, "thank's for your applause. But I'm tellin' ye that what I've handed ye is good goods. It's all over so far as you are concerned.

It's a case of 'save yourself, devil take the hindmost.'"

"Ye mean it?" cried Wild Frank.

"Sure."

"This gang's gotter dis-band?"

"Or all who remain here will be killed by the Royal North-West Mounted Police—yes."

A murmur of fear ran around the circle of deadly faces.

Wild Frank beckoned to Apache Tim.

Tim walked apart with Wild Frank.

"Is this on de level?" whispered Frank.

"Sure as you ate yer breakfast and had yar 'mawn-ins' mawnin' drink."

"What about the gal?"

"Oh, she belongs to me."

"What about the cash?"

"We will divide all the loot of the gang to-night."

"What about the chap Basil Tyler?"

"That darned Mounted policeman?"

"Yep."

"Thet's up to the band."

"How do you make that out?"

"I ain't goin' to take no hand in that game. What ever the boys wan't done, I'll do."

"What's the matter witchew? Got fever an' ager?"

"Not much."

"Then why this show er white-feather?"

"I ain't showing nothin' to-night. There's ain't a color in my gol'-pan. Not a raffle has panned out for me this past six months. I've got my share of the bandit's loot locked up in under me vest. I ain't takin' no chances more with the law. This gal I've got is a good looker. She will make me a pretty good wife. I git married to her this afternoon. We skips this territory by the light of the moon."

"Haw! Haw! Going away on a lonesome weddin' journey?"

"You bet. This is where I cash in my chips take my roll, and jump the game. I've got cold feet. No more outlaw game for mine. I've got enough to go and set up a saloon. This gal's good enough lookin' for me. Too blamed good lookin' for a wife to any man. Expect I'll have to put up a lot o' gunplay to keep her from gettin' stole, but I'm pretty handy with my weepins. I guess I can fight for Edith. She's wuth a good fight any way."

Wild Frank stared.

"I'll be darned ef that gal's bright eyes ain't locoed ye. Ye is a goin' ter get married to her, and turn respec'ble an' run a saloon. Gol ding ut, Tim, ye ain't no gun-man any more. Yar a love-sick sucker."

Apache Tim laughed.

"It's funny but the bright eyes o' a gal, does make a man fergit some times that his life is a hanging on the trigger of his revolver—but I'm out o' the game. I'm turned into a decent married man. I drops the old crowd to-night."

Wild Frank eased his system of a few dozen extremely choice oaths.

"Well—go yar way. Ther ain't no use talkin' ter a feller when he's plumb stuck on a likely skirt. Let her go, pop—say I wisht I was with ye. I'm gittin' sick o' being a gun-man. It looks good to the outsider but you read it from me it ain't a game wots in it wit te fireside companion one."

Wild Frank mused over his single blessedness quite a time.

He at length added a few words to the pearls of thought he had been so liberally bestrewing the atmosphere until it smelled of brimstone.

"Wot about this Basil Tyler?"

"Tohellwithhim!" snarled Apache Tim.

"Wot are ye goin' ter do wit him?"

"Aw, put it to a vote. The boys ought to be willing to vote on it now. They were all dead anxious to cast the death-vote this morning."

"Well, then, cum on an' we'll try out tha' temper uv the gang."

But when Apache Tim and Wild Frank suggested the death-vote there was an unexpected shifting of positions.

"I guess I ain er lookin' fer trouble," cried Long Jack o' Texas. "I ain't goin' ter git any of them Mounted Perleece down on me fer a doin' up one o' their poddnars."

"Ner me," cried Poker Tom. "Not any on my plate, not fer mine."

Apache Tim sneered.

"You are a lot of chipmunks," he howled, the leaping hazel spots coming once more in his eyes.

"Well, it's alright fer you ter call us names," cried Wild Frank, "yar goin' on yar weddin' trip ter night an' are going ter skip this gang then and thar? Why don' ye let some o' the boys come ter some o' yar weddins? Ye ain't no frien' ter us—yar jest a measly skipper, that's wot."

The gang applauded.

This angered Apache Tim to a white-heat.

His eyes now snapped dangerously.

"Get me a pack o' cards," he yelled.

A pack of playing cards were quickly handed him.

It was not thought gentlemanly in the North-West not to have a pack of playing cards always handy.

Playing cards were part of every gentleman's kit.

"Now!" cried the guerilla leader, "it's a game. Wild Frank and I will deal cards. The man who first gets the ace of clubs is to kill the Mounted Policeman. *The other man gets the gal. See?*"

The bandits gasped and shivered.

"Gee, thet's a game wuth playin' fer," cried Walla Walla Cy. "Any way, feller outlaws, either we are a goin' ter dance ter night at the weddin' er Apache Tim er at the weddin' er Wild Frank. They be the corpse o' that t'arnal Mounted Perlicemun any way ter liven up the festivi-tees."

"Deal the cyards," yelled Long Jack o' Texas.

Apache Tim began.

The dealing was a simple one.

First a card was dealt face up to Wild Frank.

It was the Jack of Diamonds.

Then a card was dealt face up to Apache Tim.

It was the King of Hearts.

Then a card was flung at Wild Frank.

Another card was dealt to Apache Tim.

Backward and forward the game went.

Were there *no* aces in the pack.

"Wow!" howled Walla Walla Cy, "thar's an ace."

He was right.

But it was not the fatal ace; the ace of clubs.

It was the ace of diamonds.

The deals went on with regularity now!

Ah!

There came an ace!

It had hardly turned its funereal face to the watching ring of ruffians when Apache Tim pounced upon it.

"Wild Frank has the fatal ace of clubs," yelled the guerrilla leader. "He must kill the Mounted Policeman. I will marry that girl!"

CHAPTER X.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

Basil Tyler and Edith Ross gazed at each other with a disconsolate expression.

The word disconsolate is used advisedly.

The young man and the pretty young girl were both North-West to the core.

They knew how the vagaries of fortune whipped one first here, then there, and they did not despair.

Basil was determined not to give in his hope of a rescue for Edith and himself while life lasted.

Edith consoled herself with the thought that until she was married she was single.

"Well?" asked Edith.

She was shackled to a pole in the center of a tent, but she was no longer gagged and blindfolded.

Apache Tim knew that he was going to break his camp that night and therefore he cared little as to what either Basil or Edith saw.

As for Edith's screams had she been disposed to use her voice, she knew that it would be an idle waste of breath. She was far from the point where screams would help her.

Basil also was fettered to a pole at one end of the tent.

There had been so far no ill treatment of either of the unfortunate pair.

In fact, Basil's wound had been dressed in a clumsy fashion by the renegade who acted as surgeon for the bandits, himself one of the gang.

Edith had been given plenty of food. Basil had shared equally well.

But not the slightest hint had been dropped as to what was to be their ultimate fate, save what the couple had gathered while on the way to the outlaw's camp.

"Well, Edith," cried Basil at last, "I hear that we are up against it for fair."

"Doesn't it look that way!" replied the spirited girl.

"But I'm safe for awhile."

"Why do you say that?"

"Well, I will tell you. You know that no one has tried to see if I have a weapon concealed about me."

"No one has searched you?"

"No."

"Have you a weapon?"

"I have."

A gleam of relief came to Basil's face.

"We aren't lost yet," he said grimly, with a firm set to his jaws.

"What can we do?" sighed the girl. "We are only two."

"Oh, well, sicker kids than we have lived, girl. Brace up. This life is a game of one darned thing after another you know. We won't cash in our checks until we have to do it."

"Never say die. Nail the colors to the mast! Fight while a plank of the ship is afloat, Paul Jones!"

Tyler laughed.

"That's the talk, Edith. I'm not going to give in to these bandits until I——"

"Am captured, tied to a pole in a tent, and slaughtered," rejoined Edith.

Tyler turned red.

"Wasn't I the easiest thing to get captured the way I did?"

"I will admit that it was the easiest capture I have ever seen."

"But you were to blame, Edith?"

"I?"

"Precisely."

"I to blame, man, you are mad."

"No, nor even vexed. You are entirely to blame, Edith Ross, for my capture and I can prove that you are."

"You can not prove it."

"May I try?"

"You may."

"You see when I called on you I was so taken by your hum—your beautiful bright eyes, that I forgot there was such a thing as the Apache Tim gang of bandits on this earth."

"W-e-l-l, of all the nerve! Did you study that sweet speech up in the time since the bandit batted you over the head with a rifle and now?"

Tyler smiled a sickly smile.

The girl looked at him severely.

"Because if you have taken all this time you are a chump."

"A chump?"

"You are! A man who has all that time to make up a *real* nice speech only manages to compliment my eyes. Now a young crow could have had the same thing said about her—they are all eyes, you know."

Tyler made a wry face.

"There's other things to compliment me about," added Edith who put on a most angelic expression. "Mr.—ah, well never mind his name, says I have the *sweetest* mouth. And Mr.—ah I don't care to mention names—says I am gifted with a *remarkable* brain—and all you can do is to compliment my eyes—my, but you're slow!"

Poor Tyler didn't know whether to laugh or frown.

He compromised by smiling and frowning at the same time.

"Thunder and lightning effect—posed for by Wat Tyler—I mean Basil Tyler. Honestly, the best thing in the gallery of living pictures, I assure you."

This time Tyler laughed.

"You're a nervy girl. About to be forced into a marriage with the biggest thief in the North-West, you smile and jest," Basil said.

"What's the use of tears? Besides I might say to myself, this man is a thug, a gun-man, a thief, an outlaw. You know that in advance! I might marry a man and not know what he was and have him turn out to be all that Apache Tim is and more. You never *can* tell where your husband will drift."

"If I were you I'd pass up the bandit person and take on a good honest young policeman, like—me."

Edith smiled.

"Don't know but what you would be able to fill the part better than Apache Tim! I'll think you over!"

Call around in a couple of weeks, if the place isn't taken I'll see what I can do for you."

"Now, I'm in earnest."

"So am I—but first before you propose to marry me don't you think you had better rescue me?"

"Certainly."

Basil jumped up from the post to which he was supposed to have been tied, leaned over and kissed the astonished girl, untied her bonds in the twinkling of a robin's eye, and gently urged her out of the bandit's tent, into the glorious air of freedom!

"Free!"

This was the only word that Edith could think of. And she said it over and over again, with a heart filled with thanksgiving.

But the situation was still critical.

The young policeman had managed to break his bonds while he was talking to Edith and had then come to her rescue.

It was all done in such a whirlwind fashion, including the kiss, that the girl was in a tempest of surprising emotions.

"But we are free," she whispered.

"How long we are going to be free I can not tell. If I only had some weapon I would feel better."

Edith remembered the revolver concealed at the back of her neck.

She fumbled for it and soon handed it to Basil.

"Good," he said, "but a revolver isn't as good as a rifle—by Jove, I have a plan."

"What is it?"

"Step lightly," Basil said, "this way."

Edith followed him.

Soon they were on the outskirts of the camp.

"Where are the outlaws?" Edith whispered in Basil's ear.

Basil pointed toward a camp-fire around which men were moving.

"There they are. They are playing cards. The tall man, there, is Apache Tim. Next to him stands Wild Frank, and there's the remainder of the gang crowding around the two men. I wonder what they are doing?"

Little did Basil imagine that the bandits were playing cards for his life, and the girl's future.

The couple were now several hundred feet from the camp-fire.

It had grown very dark.

The chances for escape were contingent upon darkness and thus far fate appeared to favor the man and woman.

But with only a revolver, no ammunition, nothing to eat, no horse, in a place far removed from civilization, it was about the most desperate situation that either Basil or Edith, could possibly have imagined.

The first step toward freedom had been taken.

That was about all the step that seemed possible.

Basil in swift undertones presented all these facts to Edith.

"See here," she said after a pause. "I'd rather die of starvation in the trackless woods than save my life by becoming the wife of Apache Tim. I had reserved the last bullet in that revolver I gave you for myself. Death is far better than a life with an outlaw."

Edith meant what she said. She was of the strain

that preferred death to an awful fate such as the renegade chief had blocked out for her.

Basil admired the girl more than ever. He saw that she was of sterling worth.

"I'm with you," he cried. "I don't think there's one chance in a hundred for you to escape, or for me to, either. But we will take a chance at that. I guess we are safer from the wild beasts in the forest than we are here."

Here Basil chuckled.

"What is your plan?"

"I'm going forward to see if I can't sneak up to that camp fire and get a rifle and some ammunition."

"If I had a rifle, I'd be glad to risk any forest on earth," cried Edith.

"You are going to take the risk, then," cried Basil. "I'm going to get a rifle. You take this revolver. You know what to do with it if I don't come back. Give me that knife."

Edith nodded through her fast falling tears.

Basil stole forward crouching low, and keeping the backs of the bandits toward him.

Never was progress slower or more carefully made.

Basil, knowing that his life depended upon it, did not move without the most careful preparation.

He wriggled like a worm. He stepped as lightly as the fawn.

Inch by inch he progressed, nearer, still nearer, to the outlaws.

Edith standing in the night silence, disturbed only by the wild yells of the outlaws, or the night sounds from the forest as beasts of prey prowled and cried, thought that her heart would burst with her fears.

"Where is he?" she thought to herself.

Her eyes could distinguish nothing but a dense black veil, through which her vision could not penetrate.

Edith stood thus in dire suspense.

At the same moment Basil was just getting near the light that made quivering shadows about him. Here was his most extreme danger. If he could pass through the revealing shafts of light without being discovered he might get an opportunity to steal a rifle and some ammunition.

This was Basil's objective point.

Nothing had ever been so well done before, as the young man's brave dash for freedom!

Now, he was nearing his quest.

He had got beyond the betraying shadows and far toward the outer edge of the quivering fire-lights, when he saw coming directly toward him the bulk of a man.

The man was coming from the fire.

This was shown by the huge shadow that danced ahead of him, like a giant reproduction of himself.

The figure bore a rifle.

This sentence seemed to be burned into the brain of Basil.

In a betraying flash of inner consciousness Basil knew that he was going to attack the bandit and secure the rifle or die in the attempt.

It was a moment of awful danger.

A single cry from the outlaw—and Basil would be a prisoner to be tortured to death before an hour more had passed.

The outlaw was now opposite Basil.

Basil tried to almost bury himself in the earth, in his fear of being seen.

The bandit stopped when opposite him.

Basil's blood was as water in his veins.

The outlaw seemed to be peering into the darkness. Would he try to come where Basil lay crouched like a thing of steel and iron?

Or would the outlaw continue the journey onward that he had first started upon?

Basil, while awaiting a solution of the problem in the next step of the outlaw, could feel his heart beats.

There was a rushing sound in his ears as the blood surged to his head.

Ah!

The outlaw was moving onward in a straight line.

Now his back was turned to the policeman.

Basil hated to strike an unwarned man, even if he was a bandit and richly deserved his fate. But the knowledge that his life, and Edith's happiness depended upon his right arm, nerved Basil.

As a tiger springs from the long grass of the jungle and gluts its rage in the blood of its enemy, Basil shot out from the darkness that lay about the feet of the outlaw.

The Bowie knife held in Basil's hand gave one single flash of light ere it was buried underneath the left shoulder-blade of the bandit, and ground its steel death to the heart of the burly ruffian.

Without a sound, save for a gentle sigh, the bandit crumpled forward to his knees. He shivered thus a moment and then toppled forward on his face, stone dead!

Basil had not waited for the man to fall prone upon his face.

With the motion of the blow delivered by his strong right arm, he plucked with his left hand the long rifle from the bandit's nerveless hand.

Basil twitched the ammunition belt from the outlaw's broad chest, unbuckled a similar belt from the thug's waist and rushed back toward Edith like a ghost hurrying through a grave-yard.

The boldness of the deed had caused it to succeed.

Basil Tyler now found himself in possession of a fine rifle, several hundred rounds of ammunition, two huge magazine revolvers, a belt filled with revolver cartridges and a Bowie knife.

Edith's tears of thankfulness flowed fast but being an eminently practical girl, she soon dried them, and with her revolver, and her knife, the beleaguered couple felt that they at least could make a last stand, in case they were again surprised by the outlaws.

Basil deplored his being forced to kill the unsuspecting outlaw, but he felt that the end justified the means.

"We have ammunition at all events," Basil now whispered to Edith. "Next we must hurry to the bandit's horses and secure two of them. If we can then get some provisions we can plunge into the trackless forest and try to get back to Snake Basin."

Edith followed Basil, who seemed to be gifted with that natural woodcraft talent which allowed him to steal from point to point in pitchy darkness without making an error in direction.

"You're like a cat, you can see in the dark," muttered Edith, when she stumbled over a root of a huge tree, "but I can't. I'm falling over all the timber in Keewatin territory."

Basil snickered.

"Nonsense," he cried, "I can't see any better than you can, but I have the gift of being able to remember where the trees were put when I last saw them in daylight. This manages to keep me from butting into them."

Edith, however, stumbled along after Basil cautiously as possible and at length they were overjoyed at hearing the neighing of a horse.

"There's the horses. All's well somewhere. Be careful. It's been a chill night and there's some ice here. Don't slip."

"I don't like ice. I'd rather it would rain even if it did thunder and lightning," cried Edith. "I hate a thunderbolt, though, it frightens me."

"This way," replied Basil. "Here is a horse."

The couple ran joyfully ahead.

There stood a horse, champing his bit and neighing. But by his side stood a man. He carried a rifle, which he was poising as if for a shot.

Basil and Edith heard the deadly click, click of the hammer of the rifle as it came to a full cock.

The weapon was now directed at the unfortunate couple.

"Halt!" sneered a voice. "Who goes there?"

Edith gasped.

She saw now that ice has its thunderbolts!

CHAPTER XI.

THE OUTLAW'S DISCOVERY.

"I'll kill him now," cried Wild Frank, as soon as he saw that he had been dealt the fatal ace of clubs that in the minds of all the outlaws, sealed the doom of Basil Tyler, sergeant in the Royal North-West Mounted Police.

Wild Frank grasped his revolver.

His face was that of a fiend incarnate.

"I won't monkey wit' thet feller a holy minute," the truculent outlaw yelled, "I'll shoot 'im ez I would a dawg."

Wild Frank cocked his revolver.

He ran back toward the tent in which Basil and Edith had been secured by the bandits.

On his way he stumbled over something that lay in his path.

Wild Frank nearly tumbled forward on his face.

He swore a dreadful oath.

"Hyars a drunkin loafer a gittin in th' way o' a man bound on a suddin errant—wot's this, blood?"

Wild Frank drew back a pace from the silent man, who lay face downward in his path.

"Ef it ain't Long Jack o' Texas," whispered Wild Frank to himself. "And' he's dead. By Gosh! Ef he ain't dead I'll eat 'im! Blood? By Snakes eh, some wun hez murdered 'im."

Wild Frank let a bellow out of him that could be heard a mile.

"He-l-p!" he roared lustily. "Thar's murder been did in our camp."

The horrible yells called forward every bandit about the camp fire.

They rushed in a body to where Wild Frank stood, above the silent form, and led by Apache Tim, began an investigation.

Dark as it was all were too familiar with Long Jack o' Texas to be for a moment at loss as to the identity of the silent figure that lay before them.

The starlight showed also the dark pool of blood in which the dead man lay.

"It's Long Jack!" cried Apache Tim, as he knelt beside the still form. "There's been a murder here. Get me a pine-knot torch."

Several outlaws rushed to get the torch.

Under its sickly light the face of Long Jack was turned upward to the gaze of the bandit gang.

There was a trembling of giant forms when the face of their associate was revealed.

It was one thing for them to murder.

It was another thing for the men who lived by murder to stand by the side of their murdered associate.

The hideous wound in the back of Long Jack told its story.

"No question but thet thar frien' o' ours hez been murdered by some one—I jest hope the feller ain't a member o' our band."

The expression on Wild Frank's face as he spoke these words was horrible to contemplate.

"Ef uts one o' our boys thet hez done this trick, he won't last long, see?"

Poker Tom Hudson hissed these words through his clenched teeth.

Apache Tim, wild eyed and with the hazel spark now snapping with anger within his "lamps" wildly looked around.

"Here, you Frank," the outlaw chief shouted, "you hurry up an' call th' roll."

The roll call followed.

The bandits had fallen into line to be counted, having strict military usages in their ranks, and soon Wild Frank was looking down the list of men whose names he knew well.

Two men were absent.

One was Long Jack o' Texas.

The other was the Indian, Teeke.

Wild Frank whispered the news to Apache Tim.

"That thar Injun coyote, Teeke, is missin'," cried Wild Frank.

Apache Tim's mind spun back to the time he had knocked the Indian down.

The suspicious nature of the bandit took fire.

He jumped to the conclusion that the Indian had stabbed Jack o' Texas.

"He's the man we must find. I'll cut his heart out before he is dead," roared the outlaw.

"Thet's all rite," replied Wild Frank with his habitual sneer, "but how are ye goin' ter kill a man ye don't know whar ter find?"

"Thet's hoss sense," laughed Poker Tom Hudson.

Even Apache Tim admitted that it would be hard to kill an absent man.

He calmed down somewhat.

"Well," he said, "we can turn the band out and try to round-up Teeke. If we can't find him no one can."

"Haw! Haw! Haw! Try to round-up Teeke, an Injun, in them woods over thar? Apache Tim, I tell ye agin' yar locoed; plumb locoed. Who in thunder cud find an Injun in them woods? He knows them woods as ye does yar way ter yer revolver! Why, you couldn't ketch Teeke in a thousan' years ef he got inter the woods one jump ahead o' yer."

The outlaws all nodded.

They knew that an Indian whose life had been spent in the great North-West forests could never be caught by a white man, whose knowledge of woods at best was only second hand.

"Them woods is the Injun's school," continued Wild Frank. "En they brung away from the school moren ye ever brought away frum anny school ye ever went ter, Apache Tim."

Apache Tim knew that the words of Wild Frank were wise.

His cherished plan to hunt out Teeke must be abandoned.

"Th' onny thing fer us ter do," went on Wild Frank, "is to git Teeke the next chanst we hez. Thar ain't no would so big thet some day ye can't git the other feller—ef ye has the patience ter wait, and watch while ye wait."

Once more there was a nod of appreciation from the outlaws.

All of them had been often content with the long watch for victims of their animosity.

"Wall," continued Wild Frank, who was gaining a large following in the bandit band owing to his rude eloquence upon matters affecting the band's welfare, "Thar's onny one thing left fer me ter do."

"Wots thet?" roared Poker Tom.

"Ter take the life o' thet 'tarnal skunk o' a policeman."

Wild Frank continued on his journey.

His anger was now at the brutal stage. He gloried in the deed of blood he projected. That he was designing to shoot a prisoner, unarmed and bound did not appeal to him as out of the way.

There was no decency in big Wild Frank. Kindness was unknown to him. He was a big, brutal bully, who loved carnage for the sake of the slaughter it let him accomplish.

"Ho! Ho! Ho!" Wild Frank laughed in glee as he entered the tent for the purpose of murdering the unprotected young policeman.

This would have eased Basil Tyler's mind of many misgivings about killing Jack o' Texas, had he known Wild Frank's action.

Wild Frank's bitter, mocking laughter stilled on his lips when he gave a glance about the tent.

There were the poles to which Basil Tyler and Edith Ross had been, respectively, confined to with heavy shackles.

There lay the shackles.

But the prisoners had vanished.

Wild Frank sensed the situation in a glance.

A second time he lifted up his voice in a wild roar.

Again the outlaws came tumbling over each other in answer to his summons.

It was a condition to make men laugh.

Here was Wild Frank making cogent discoveries and blatting about them like some human-calf.

Then Wild Frank's roar would be followed by the sudden entrance of a baffled band of outlaws.

The outlaws would melt away after a time and then Wild Frank would make another discovery; another roar, and the band would once more rush to the scene in wild alarm.

"Thunder!" yelled Apache Tim, who it might be said made other assertions that can not be here printed.

"You men act like a lot of children. Are ye men or are ye puppy-dogs?"

"I dunno," cried Wild Frank. "I guess I'm a puppy-dog. I've been a whirlin' around like er darned puppy-dog arter its tail fer the last hour."

Apache Tim here gave a screech like a crazy steam locomotive.

"Boys, don't you see?" the outlaw chief shrieked, "don't ye see that Basil Tyler killed Jack o' Texas? Tyler's got Jack's weapons? He an' the girl, Edith Ross, have escaped."

Wild Frank sneered.

"Say yer dumbest smart, ain't ye?" he said. "Takes a pritty smart outlaw ter tell wen his pris'ners hev esc-aped. The fac' they ain't whar he's tied 'em don't seem ter cut no ice. I tell ye boys, that thar Apache Tim is plumb smart."

Apache Tim by this time was frothing at the mouth.

He didn't care about Basil Tyler's escape half as much as he did over the escape of Edith Ross.

"Thar's goin' ter be an onexpected interruption ter the weddin' of our chief, an' his latest wife, boys," laughed Wild Frank, "look at our chief froth like a mad dog. Say, boys, that thar interrupted weddin' is some tragic ain't it?"

The laughter of the bandits almost drove Apache Tim wild.

But he managed to control himself enough to get himself in a condition to connectedly give an order.

"Get after them," Apache Tim shouted. "Get after them! I'll give my share of our loot to the man who gets the girl. Don't kill Basil Tyler. Bring him alive to me. I'll kill him myself."

The terrible vindictive gleam in the leaping eyes of the outlaw chief showed that Basil Tyler could expect no mercy if caught.

When he was alone, Apache Tim turned toward his tent.

He entered it.

His face was still convulsed with passion. His voice rumbled forth terrible oaths.

But his voice stilled in a moment after he had entered the tent.

The outlaw's face took on an expression of terrified wonder.

There stood a strange figure, looking at Apache Tim with hollow, lack-luster eyes.

CHAPTER XII.

A SURPRISED COUPLE.

"Hist!"

The figure made this sound as Basil Tyler dashed forward at it to grasp its throat.

"Don't shoot. Me friend!"

Basil stopped when he heard the words.

Edith Ross lowered the revolver she was pointing at the dim shape.

"Who are you?" questioned Basil.

"Teeke. I'm Indian."

"Indian?" said Basil. "What are you doing here?"

"Nev'r mind. I come t' talk wit you-o!"

"Why do you wish to talk with me?" cried Basil.

"I save you-o."

"You save me? How about Edith here? Is there enough 'saving' to go round?"

The Indian grinned in the starlight.

His grin was exactly like the snarl of a wolf.

"Me save both."

Tyler turned to Edith.

"What do ye think of this yellow devil?" he asked her.

Edith critically examined the Indian.

"He doesn't handsome much," she observed. "I don't have much use for the real red Indian of the North-West. They are only great, and fine and generous in story books. But when it comes to these sneaking 'yaller' kind of Indians, they aren't any good any where—even in a story book."

This judicial summing up of himself seemed to amuse, rather than offend Teeke.

"Yep!" Teeke said. "I all right, dambadInjun."

Then he stopped.

There was a self sufficient smirk on his face.

Edith laughed. Basil joined his laughter to that of the girl's.

"He certainly revels in his badness," the girl cried.

"Nobody knows how bad I am."

Nobody knows or gives a—cent."

There was a merry twinkle in Basil's eyes as he sang these words softly.

Edith saw the twinkle by the light of the stars and she came to a decision quickly.

"There's no other way. I don't care if this chap is brick color or yellow color, I'm going to vote to trust him."

"There's yellow bricks," put in Basil.

"That's true. Now come over to him with some cash," the girl added, "and I guess you'll own him."

Basil began cautiously.

"Where did you come from?" he asked.

"Thar," the Indian replied.

Basil thought a moment.

"Edith," he whispered, "will you steal back where you can watch the bandit fire? I want to be sure this fellow isn't jobbing us. I don't want any bandit's lure to prevail over us."

Edith stole away and left Basil alone with Teeke.

Basil continued his examination of the Indian.

"If you belong to Apache Tim's gang," said Basil, "why are you willing to help me escape?"

The Indian shrugged his shoulders.

"You know who I am?"

"Yep."

"Well, what is my name?"

"Tyler. Mounted cop."

"You know me all right. Now what will you take to lead me back to civilization?"

"No. Not do that. Risk big. Hep big. Will put you on road to Snake Basin for—one thousan' dollar."

Basil jumped.

"That's a lot of money," he said slowly. "Why you want so much?"

"Get way o-f-f wit' one thousan' dollar. Apache Tim he got l-o-n-g arm. He go fast wit l-o-n-g arm. I g-o faster with monee."

This time Basil understood.

"Oh," he remarked, "you are willing to put me on the Snake Basin trail for one thousand dollars, Can-

ada money, and then you are going to make your sneak from Apache Tim's gang of outlaws?"

"Yep."

"Where you go?"

"N-e-v-e-r mind. L-o-n-g way. Far North. Apache Tim no live where I go."

The Indian's meaning was plain to Basil now.

He knew that with the one thousand dollars far in the Arctic regions where the foot of white man seldom pressed the snow and ice the Indian would be safe.

He could visit a few of the farthest north trading posts of the great Hudson's Bay Company, where furs were the traffic of the day, and buy him once a year things dear to the red-man's heart; and when he returned to the snowy regions where he had hidden himself, he would be the greatest Indian in his tribe.

A thousand dollars was big money in the Arctic regions.

Usually five dollars was all the wealth of an entire tribe.

Basil now had but one more idea to dwell upon.

He burst out with it immediately.

"Why are you selling out the Apache Tim band?" he asked.

"Apache Tim he s-t-r-i-k-e me. I call him t-r-a-i-t-o-r. He knock me down. Look!"

The Indian exhibited his teeth.

Three of his upper ones had vanished.

"Biff," said the savage. He raised his hand as he spoke in the attitude of a man about to strike a blow. Then he pointed meaningfully at his teeth with the unsightly missing ones plainly showing.

"He! He!" tittered Basil. "So Apache Tim handed you a stiff right arm straight punch when you called him a tr-a-i-t-o-r?"

"Yep."

"You now want to get your revenge by aiding his future wife to escape?"

"Yep."

"To say nothing of me, who—between us is the future husband of the future wife Apache Tim isn't going to get."

"Yep."

"You therefore agree to lead Edith Ross and I to the trail that will take us to Snake Basin, for one thousand dollars cash?"

"Yep."

"Well, you can't lead any too quick. Start ahead."

"Nope."

"No—well why not? The bargain is made."

"Nope. One thou' dollar or no start."

"What? You bloody yellow Indian! Do you think I'm going to pay for the job before you deliver the goods?"

"You go back see Apache Tim, 'less you pay one thou' dollar in advance," cried the Indian.

Edith had returned at this point.

She had overheard the last remark of Teeke's.

"You've got to give up," she said with her usual direct manner of leaping over obstacles. "This isn't the hold up at Snake Basin, but it's a 'hold-up' in Apache Tim's 'midst' all right."

This decided Basil.

He pulled his money belt from out of his jacket.

It had been concealed about his body just beneath his shoulders and as no one had searched him, he had carried it undisturbed, ever since his capture.

The money belt carried a fat "wad" of bills.

"Sakes alive," cried Edith, "am I going to marry a millionaire?"

"I hate to give up my hard-earned coin—say do you think my life is worth five hundred?" asked Basil.

"W-el-l! It's a problem. I might be willing to sell it cheap in a year after we are married—but just now I'll take a chance! Yes, I guess it's worth the money. But you're giving up five hundred for me, remember, and I know I'm not worth the money."

"We'll talk that over a year from now. Just now you seem to me to be the cheapest purchase I've ever made."

As he spoke, Basil handed Teeke one thousand good Canadian green-backs.

The Indian chuckled when he got the money.

One grab; one swift motion toward his body; the money had vanished utterly.

"What d' ye think of that?" said Basil in amaze.

"Talk about your lightning changes? First I had the money, then he had it——"

"He's evidently going to keep it. Now, you yellow devil make good or it's your finish," the girl hissed at the Indian.

"You bet!" chimed in Basil. "He may be luring us on, and may have an idea that he has done us out of that cash, but I'm right within a few feet of him and if he bats a false eye-lash at me, he gets his, quick. See?"

Basil held up his ugly looking gun as he spoke.

The Indian outlaw only smiled.

"You see dad again," he smiled at Edith.

Indians are excellent mimics.

Teeke gave such an imitation of fat, pursy, painfully dignified little Whiskey Bill Ross, the "champeen" fighter of booze in the North-West, that Edith, dutiful daughter as she was, giggled.

As for Basil, although he knew he was in a fair way to be the son-in-law of so much owl-like dignity, he almost betrayed the hiding place of the party to the bandits by his hearty laughter.

"Well, we are fooling away good time here," at length ventured Edith. "I can hear the early birds beginning to cry in the forest. It's almost morning. If we are going to get away from here we must get away quick."

"True," cried Basil. "Say, Teeke, how about horses?"

"You git on that hoss," said the Indian to Edith. "We walk! We steal heap bandit hoss bimeby."

The three then silently stole away toward the place where the bandit horses were lariatied for the night.

"Move heap slow," whispered he Indian outlaw. "Here come Apache Tim."

The regular hoof-beats of a flying horse could now be heard by all, thumping swiftly toward them from the outlaw camp.

"We are pursued," hissed Basil. "Here comes Apache Tim."

CHAPTER XIV.

A SPECTRAL FIGURE.

"What is that?"

Apache Tim staggered to the far side of his tent.

He saw facing him the form of the Revolutionary soldier-officer, that had so startled him when he had first seen it on the Fort Keewatin trail, that led from that Hudson's Bay Company post to the hamlet of Snake Basin.

Apache Tim's trembling hand rose to his face.

He tried to shut out the sight.

Apache Tim was confident that he faced a ghost.

"The second time this ghost has given me a warning of my death," stammered the outlaw. "Why did I not take heed from the first warning and flee from my band?"

The officer stood with his arms folded.

His curious cocked-hat was still crushed down upon his white wig with its tiny queue sticking out behind like a handle to an old fashioned jug.

The man's hair still showed in front under his wig.

The figure wore its queer old-fashioned, full bottom coat, of plum-color, adorned with bullion lace.

The top boots, knee-breeches, gold spurs, and sword completed the clothes of the tiny figure.

The various points of the wraith's dress had been burned into Tim's brain for he did not doubt that he stood in a ghostly presence.

"Well," the tiny voice of the strange figure piped up again in its well remembered tones. "Well?"

Apache Tim's knees smote together.

His tongue refused to hurl his usual oaths from its tip.

The outlaw's face was white and he tottered like a man overcome with fear.

"W-h-a-t—do you want-t," stuttered the agonized bandit.

"You know?" cried the figure.

"I know?"

"Yes."

"I know what?"

The figure drew itself up to its full height.

"Do you mean to say," the tiny voice hissed, "that you don't know why I am here?"

"I don't—truly-y I don't," tremblingly replied the outlaw.

The figure drew a snuff box from its pocket.

It daintily opened the box.

Apache Tim's face was like that of a corpse.

As the snuff-box opened it gave out a fierce spurt of smoke and flame.

Apache Tim turned whiter than ever if possible.

The figure took a pinch of the shining, seething white hot vapor in its hands and coolly took a sniff at the boiling mixture with its nose.

The soldier then smiled as if pleased with the aroma of the burning potion and after gracefully flicking some of the seething mass from its hands, it closed the snuff-box with a snap and returned it to its pocket.

Then the figure spoke.

"Well," its piping voice said. "I may as well tell you that I came after *you*!"

The last word came with such a startling pop from the figure's mouth that Apache Tim jumped nearly a foot high.

"Came for *me*?" he whispered. "Why, where from?"

The figure winked at Tim.

"As if *you* didn't know?" it smiled. "Why, man, you know where I come from? Do you suppose that

you can live the life you have lived, of abandon, of out-lawry, of deeds of blood and get away with it?"

"I didn't think-k anything-g about it," stammered Apache Tim.

"Of course not? None o' you bandits do. Well, I've come to tell you that your course is about run. You're at the end of your rope. We need you, down there."

The figure pointed in an unpleasant way and in a most suggestive one directly at the toe of his top-boot.

"They want me down there?" cried Tim. "Then I'm doomed? I'm going to die?"

"Why, of course? That's the way with you outlaws. As long as things go your way, you're the finest things on earth. But let the game begin to go against you—my word, but how you holler."

The figure allowed a sneer to pass over its face.

"But why do you come back here for me in this, ahem, this shape?" asked the outlaw.

"It's a punishment. I was in life an officer of the King's own regiment stationed in Ottawa in 1776. I killed my best friend in a duel, and I was sent for."

"From below?" stammered the outlaw.

"Exactly."

"Where you are going to take me?"

"You're right. I can't rest in my grave until I have brought down there one hundred men."

"What?"

"You make my one hundredth. As it's a good many years since the War of the Revolution when this happened, the thing that has kept me walking the earth like another Wandering Jew. I have made up my mind that I will not lose you, for this is my chance to sleep undisturbed in my grave. Come on."

Apache Tim howled his fears now.

There never was a more lamentable specimen of a bandit, frightened most into insensibility.

"No! No!" he roared, "I will not go with you."

"You must," said the figure in a hollow voice. "Outlaw that you are; it is your doom."

Apache Tim gave a howl of deadly fear.

His face was white and distorted.

His eyes roved about for a way to escape.

He decided to run.

He turned and dashed out of his tent into the darkening atmosphere, a cowed, terribly frightened bandit, afraid that every moment was to be his last.

No live man ever made Apache Tim run.

But he fell before the supernatural.

This figure, which in his heart he felt was a ghost, had frightened him half to death.

He ran like a boy afraid of his shadow.

He dashed out into the night and away toward his horses with deadly fear at his heart and a terrible feeling that his time had come at last.

As he ran, behind him came the figure of his Revolutionary soldier running quite as rapidly as he did.

Step by step bandit and queerly dressed soldier rushed away.

Apache Tim saw the figure behind him.

He made a jump for a horse that was lariatied near by.

In his haste he did not try to take up the lariat.

Instead he pulled the long steel pin, which had been driven into the ground with fifty feet of twisted rope attached to it to give the horse a chance to graze, out with a jerk, vaulted into his saddle and rushed

away digging his heels into his horse with grim determination to escape somehow at all costs.

The long writhing rope streamed out behind the flying bandit.

Apache Tim did not stop to see if he was pursued. He only thought of his escape.

Panic stricken he rode away beating his horse over the head with his fists—anything to put distance between him and the figure, which he felt sure was right behind him.

It was this figure of despair that darted down upon the three, Edith Ross, Basin Tyler and Teeke.

That some terrible disaster had come to Apache Tim all three felt sure as they saw the bandit coming toward them.

Never was such speed made in the starlighted night of the North-West.

Edith cowered behind the horse that she was just about to mount when the hurrying hoof beats of Apache Tim's steed beat upon her ears.

Basil twisted his revolver from his belt ready to meet what he thought was an attack by Apache Tim. But Teeke gave a chuckle of delight.

His face was contorted with rage.

Into his fierce Indian eyes there came a wicked expression.

He saw his opportunity for revenge.

The Indian's hand went to his belt.

He drew his revolver.

Apache Tim was right abreast of the savage now.

Teeke jerked his weapon up. His eye, implacable with deadly hate, shone as it glanced along the revolver barrel.

There was a sharp ringing report.

A narrow film of flame shot out into the night.

Apache Tim threw his hands above his head.

His body sagged forward.

His horse gave one terrified leap.

The animal in his fright did not see that he was on the edge of an awful canyon.

Over the brink dashed the horse bearing the dead body of Apache Tim.

The shot of the Indian Teeke, had passed through the outlaw's brain.

But his frightened steed had run on, over the edge of a terrible precipice.

Crash!

Crash!

Crash!

The three listeners heard the horse's body go whirling into space.

The horse had plunged one thousand feet deep down into the canyon, bearing with him the dead body of the outlaw chieftain.

Loud and shrill the terrible war-cry of Teeke rang over the scene.

He had avenged the blow that Apache Tim, the outlaw had dealt him.

"Run for our lives," now hissed Basil, who first of the party came to himself.

He grasped Edith and swung her up on the horse with one effort of his powerful muscles.

Teeke had meanwhile run ahead and had secured two of the outlaw's horses.

In a trice the three hurried away into the darkness. Basil and Teeke vaulted to the backs of the horses.

"Dis way," cried the unmoved Indian.

The three hurried off into the darkness now being shot with the first faint gray light of the coming dawn.

The sound of the shot had recalled the outlaws from their vain search in the woods.

They could be heard crashing hither and thither in their anxiety to get back to the camp.

"Hurry," hissed the Indian to Basil.

Basil's heart was hot within him. He felt that the foolish desire for revenge had caused the Indians to shoot Apache Tim when there was danger of calling every outlaw to the scene, and he was exceedingly angry.

Teeke was, however, unmoved.

"No fear," the Indian cried.

The howls of the outlaws could be plainly heard. Some of them had secured horses and were aimlessly riding around here and there trying to find who had fired the shot that alarmed them.

Others of the band ran hither and thither calling loudly for Apache Tim.

But while the voice of Wild Frank could be plainly heard trying to still the panic that appeared to have settled upon the outlaws, Teeke, the Indian, was unmoved. His savage mein when he had killed Apache Tim had departed with the last note of his war-whoop.

"Don't get 'fraid," the Indian cried, "no hurry. Dis way."

Basil's steed reared in affright.

The Indian had urged his horse right over what seemed to be a slanting brow of the awful canyon down which Apache Tim's horse had dashed.

But after seeing that Edith had followed the now silent Indian directly over the canyon's brow Basil managed to control his horse and follow.

His joy was great when he saw that the Indian had led the way directly through some overhanging limbs of the gigantic forest trees that shielded the canyon at the point where they were progressing and had reached a gentle trail that by easy winding stages took the party down to the valley below.

The glint of a river could be seen as the party hurried forward in the valley.

Basil looked back.

From where he stood no view of the trail could be seen.

It was shielded from above and below by the rank vegetation that grew as high as a horse's head and which thus would utterly conceal them as they passed down the trail.

Teeke pulled in his horse.

The Indian pointed back up the trail.

"This Injun trail," Teeke said. "No white man know he. It only trail to get down canyon in fifteen mile tha-a-t 'way, or twenty-y mile dis way."

As the Indian spoke he waved his arms to the right and left.

"Outlaws back up above. They know no way get down here but by going r-r-o-u-n-d! We safe here—bime bye we go r-r-o-u-n-d to trail. Ugh!"

By the only possible avenue of escape the three had proceeded.

No one knew how to get to where they were in all the outlaw band save the Indian.

"Saved!" cried Edith in ecstasy.

"Hurrah!" cried Basil.

The Indian, however, whose sharp eyes were never

for a moment still but were watching the trail behind them as if in constant dread of an attack dashed their hopes a second later.

"Man he come down trail," the Indian whispered. "Look. Here come man."

Basil looked back.

He saw a figure running along the trail in the direction his party was proceeding.

Basil gasped. He gave a loud cry.

He dug his heels into his horse's side, and the gallant beast dashed directly at the on-coming figure.

Edith gasped.

Then with a scream she followed after Basil.

Teeke, however, simply raised his rifle to take a shot at the strange figure.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BRAVERY OF GALE MORRIS.

"In the name of all that's wonderful how did you get here?" cried Basil Tyler as he rushed to the side of the figure.

Edith not three jumps of her horse behind Basil, now, stared in amaze.

For peering at her under a white wig came a face and form that she well knew.

Edith almost fell from her horse in her surprise.

"It's Gale Morris!" the girl nearly shrieked.

"Sure it is," replied that individual, "and a blood fast chase you have led me."

"By all that's great how did you come in that rig?"

A third voice answered.

The party stared again.

The speaker this time was Sleepy George Potter.

"This rig?" replied Gale Morris nothing loth to explain. "Oh, this is my ghostly rig. I used it to scare Apache Tim into fits."

"What?" cried Basil.

"I shore did. It's a good rig isn't it? Don't I look the part?" replied Morris.

"You certainly look the part of a Revolutionary officer if that's what you mean."

"It certainly is. For that's the part I dressed up in."

"Do you—would you—can you, tell me how you got those clothes?"

"Which question shall I answer first, Basil?" dryly replied Morris.

"Might as well answer the one about the clothes; that is the part as to where you got them," replied Tyler who was sadly twisted by this time.

"Oh, I found them lying in the trail."

"Found them," queried Basil now thoroughly bewildered.

"That's what I said. Say, has any one got anything to drink in this party? I'm dying for a drink."

Teeke produced a flask.

It was empty when Morris returned it.

Then Morris squared himself for the flood of anxious questions he knew were coming his way.

"Come one, come all, this rock shall fly, from its firm base, as soon as I," quoted Morris.

"Lay on, Macduff!" cried Edith, nodding her head at Basil.

Basil immediately laid on.

"Tell us about the clothes?"

"I found them, as I told you, lying in the trail," replied Morris.

The duel of words was now on between Morris and Basil.

"What trail?" asked Basil.

"The trail leading somewhere near here—I don't know just where—and Snake Basin, a village situated, and located in——"

"Never mind. This is no land surveyor's office. But how did you find the clothes in the trail?"

Morris opened his eyes wide.

"How did I find the clothes?" he added. "Why I found them because they lay in such plain sight in the trail that a blind man could almost have seen them chappie, old boy."

"Well, who laid them there?"

"I'm a Rocky mountain goat if I know. There was no gent disrobing when I was there. No one was in sight. Nothing but the clothes."

"But clothes don't walk."

"Not unless there's a man inside of 'em in case they are men's clothes or a woman in case they are women's clothes."

"Hum."

"Likewise Oh."

"But, man, did some one leave, or did some one not leave the clothes there?"

"As the clothes were there some one did leave them there. That's a chincho, old sport oh."

Edith broke in merrily.

"Basil, what a lawyer was spoiled in making you a policeman. That was a most lawyer-like question—'did some one leave the clothes there or did some one not leave the clothes there?' is a peach question. Let me talk awhile."

Accordingly Edith began her questions.

"Now tell me Morris, dear, where did you find the clothes?"

Morris gasped.

He saw that Edith was going over the same ground again.

But he answered just the same.

"Lying In the trail. The trail between this place and Snake Basin. The clothes were lying in the trail. There was no one inside or outside of the clothes. The clothes were the clothes I have on. No, they don't fit me. Yes, they are the clothes of a Revolutionary soldier. I don't know where the soldier has revolted or not recently. I know I do. If there's anything I hate it is a thickheaded lot of people who just *wont* understand the plain facts I'm trying to give them."

With these words Morris sat down on a tree stump. Edith and Basil laughed merrily.

So did Sleepy George—but he did not laugh for several minutes after the others had finished. But, any way, he caught on some time before the joke had been forgotten.

That was going "some" for Sleepy George.

Edith, however, was, woman-like, determined to stick to her point.

"Very good, Morris," she continued. "We will

now drop the clothes question. We will continue our questions however."

Morris sighed.

"Now then," said Edith, "how did you happen to see the clothes?"

"Because they were so prominent that I could not help seeing them lying in the road."

"Hum. But why were you there to see them?"

"My horse brought me there!"

Edith stamped her foot on the ground.

She had dismounted from her horse in her anxiety to hear all she could and was now standing close to Morris.

"Gale Morris," she cried, as she put the tip of her right fore-finger very close to Morris's nose. "Don't you dare to guy a poor girl who is trying to extract information from a trifier."

Morris winked at Basil.

"Spiel girl," he cried. "Your questions will not be enveloped in levity any more. Spiel 'em, I say!"

"Good," replied Edith.

"That's not a question it is an exclamation."

"Rats!"

"That's another exclamation."

"I'll say something stronger than 'Rats,' if you don't stop."

"My isn't she pretty, when she's angry? But oh, you Basil—I feel sorry for you when you marry this flaming bunch of bad-temper. Anger in 'your girl' is nice, eh?—but oh, you wife!"

Edith smiled.

"Now, Gale Morris, all this bunch of fun you've been handing out is done for a purpose. Don't you let me think you fool me. Why, you are just trying to distract us so that we wont ask you why you were on the trail?"

Morris hung down his head and blushed.

"Yes, I know you, Gale," added Edith, "What has happened is this. You have been trying to rescue us and have put yourself in this disguise to accomplish this task, and have risked your life in this costume to get access to Apache Tim's camp, in hopes that you could aid us?"

The gallant chap held down his head with the air of a whipped dog.

"W-el-l," he stammered, "But you-u se-e-e."

"Yes, we see," dryly replied Edith. "We see plainly. You have done your duty in this case, and fifty times more. You have done much toward saving us."

"Not a heap lot. You'd pretty well saved yourself before I got into the game," replied Morris.

"Don't you think that. If you hadn't created some kind of a diversion that attracted the mind of Apache Tim from us, you know it would have been very possible that we would have been recaptured. As it was——"

"You did something that frightened Apache Tim into a panic that ended in his flight and death at the weapon of Teeke, the Indian here," put in Basil.

"Now what did you do?" cried Edith.

"Yes, tell us, Gale," added Sleepy George. "I've been a lyin' eont hyar in them bushes awaitin' ter hyar frum yah, an' the fust thing I see was thet thar Apache Tim a comin' a tumblin' over that thar canyon, an' he an' his hoss a going lickety-split et thet."

Ef that thar shot, sez I, didn't do fer him, thet fall'll jar him some."

All turned and peered down in the bottom of the canyon.

There they caught a glimpse with the rising sun of a thing of bruised and crushed flesh, a heap of broken humanity that had once lived, and the outlines of a gallant horse that had rushed over the canyon's brink taking with it the horrible dead bandit.

"His troubles is over," said Sleepy George. "Wall, he mount hev been consid'ble of a man. He hed pints thet might hev made 'im a fine man, had he stuck ter the decent path. Thar's plenty of fitin' an' shootin' and trouble coming ter any decent man out hyar in these har wilderness, 'thout joinin' a gang o' outlaws, fer them thet will be outlaws some day meets the law-men, and the outlaws then hayn't got a look in, wen law an' order speaks. It don't pay, boys ter be crooked."

This epitaph was all that Apache Tim ever got.

His body was left to the carrion birds of the air and the beasts of the field.

In the danger the party were in there was no time to give the outlaw even the unceremonious burial that they would have liked to have given him.

The outlaws alive were now heard shooting, yelling and cursing on the bluff that ran along the canyon, and Basil ordered the party to take up its journey.

"In spite of what Teeke tells us," said Basil, "I don't feel that we are by any means safe yet. We had better hurry to the Snake Basin trail. It's not so sure in my mind that the outlaws don't know that we are down here and that they can't catch up with us. Where are your horses?"

Morris and Sleepy George said that they were lariatied near the entrance to the trail and thither the party hurried postponing for the time being any further inquiry into Gale Morris's brave act.

But after the party was again all mounted and had reached the trail back to Snake Basin, Edith pressed home her questions as to how Morris had managed to effect an entrance to the camp of the outlaws.

"It was simple," he cried, "when you were shot-up in the Snake Basin hold-up I just naturally started out to see if I couldn't round you up, and be of some help. The people in Snake Basin think slow, anyway they are in a hole of stupid life most of the time, and when I heard the shots I saw it would take days to have the villagers get it into their heads that there had even been a hold-up."

"Yes?" questioned Basil.

"And feelin' this way," added Morris, "I saw it was going to be considerable of a spell before there would be a posse organized to try and run down the bandits and rescue you."

"Ah?" breathed Edith.

"Now I knew somethin' erbout that thar outlaw, Apache Tim. He's been a pretty hard character for a long time. The last time I knew of him he ran off in a hold-up the young an' pretty wife of a ranchman. He plugged her husband full of bullets and then that night he married the newly made widow."

"Dreadful!"

"Now that gal was some gal. She managed to git off by herself within ten minutes arter the Indian weddin' ceremony, and she jumps over the canyon's brink whar ye sees the chap Apache Tim go. In fact

when I seen him again and sees him going over the canyon, I hopes he wasn't dead so he could remember the poor girl who jumped there to save herself from living with him an unloved wife."

"That's the kind of a woman I like," chimed in Edith. "She made one mistake. She ought to have lured Apache Tim to the canyon's brink and then pushed him over and jumped herself. I had a nice bullet reserved for Tim and myself, you know Basil. I didn't propose to join 'the heft of his wives.'"

Basil laughed.

"Well," added Morris, "I figured where Edith would land and where you would land. I knew as to you, Basil, it would be short sharp and sudden like for you. A slit throat comes quick behind a sturdy outlaw arm."

"That's right," cried Basil feeling of his throat.

"Well, thus I saw thet if I was a-goin' to do anything I must do it quick. So, I hustled off on my hoss as fast as I could get his legs to move."

"Good man!" said Edith.

"And Sleepy George here, just naturally wanted to help in the rescue and he came along."

"Good old boy," cried Basil and Edith together.

"Well," added Morris, "we loped along as fast as we could go until we came to a turn in the road."

"Ah?" said Edith.

"It was about er mile from Snake Basin where the village turns into a trail that comes out hyear, don't you know," said Morris.

Edith and Basil nodded.

They knew the spot very well.

Edith's eyes were narrowing with a new thought.

"You mean where the cabin of Crazy-Tommy Sutton is?"

"Yes."

"Well?" the girl said with suppressed eagerness.

"Well, it was thar that we sees the regimentals I have on."

"They were lying in the road?" cried Edith.

"Yep," answered Morris.

"I see it all now," roared the girl. "Why didn't I see it before?"

"Ye most ginnerally sees things thet way. I've often noticed," added Sleepy George, "that ef ye could foresee as well as ye could hindsee what a great thing it would be?"

"Wouldn't it?" laughed Edith. "In this case it might be best all around. Now I see things as they really are. You see—"

"Yes, yes?" cried Basil who was all ears. "Hurry up."

"Well," added Edith. "It was this way. Crazy Tommy Sutton left those things in the road there."

"What?" cried Morris.

"Crazy Tommy for years has been thinking that he was a reincarnation of a Revolutionary soldier. He has been wearing this suit about the village for years talking, while he did so, some crazy nonsense about being an officer stationed at Ottawa in the Revolutionary War. He used to heat pennies, and old fake guinea's of the reign of George the Third and give them to small boys in the village—They thought Crazy Tommy was straight from—you know the place."

"Oh, no," dryly put in Basil. "I know of the place. I don't know it."

"You will some day," answered the girl.

"About the time I'm married, eh?" added Basil.

"Perhaps—you never can tell," returned the girl. "Marriage is a lottery."

"Any way, it seems that where I got the suit, who left the suit, and why, is pretty well cleared up, eh?" cried Morris.

"Yes," answered Edith.

"Then I will continue my story," added Morris. "Well, it came to my mind that here was a chance to get into Apache Tim's camp. I put on the uniform and started for his camp."

"Pretty dangerous thing to do," said Edith.

"Well, not as I figured it."

"Oh," said Basil.

"You see," added Morris, "I made up my mind that there was a chance to git to Apache Tim an' so I took it. I found in the pocket of this coat—say ain't I a dream in it?—an old-fashioned snuff box, and a little slip of paper saying that the stuff was powder that would burn with a flame and not burn any one."

"Wonder what it was?" said Edith.

"I dunno. But any way," continued Morris, "I used the stuff an' found it would burn with an apparent flame but wouldn't burn you."

"Probably some preparation of phosphorus," remarked Basil.

"I dunno. But ez soon ez I seen it, I knew I could scare that outlaw chief pretty nearly to death."

Here Teeke broke in and told how it had been pretty thoroughly understood in the outlaw band that a "vision" had warned Apache Tim of his death.

"Band say," cried Teeke, "Old soldier of bime bye, he dead, warn Tim he got to die que-e-k."

Edith saw the entire matter in a breath.

"Ho! Ho!" the girl cried. "I see it now. There must have been a prior meeting between Apache Tim and Crazy Tommy before you arrived in Tommy's clothes, Morris. The first meeting frightened the outlaw half to death and your coming in as you did again, made Tim think his time had come. What did you say to Tim?"

"I handed him the usual line of ghost stuff," replied Morris. "I told him that he was going to die soon, that I was sent from—you know—to get him. I made a fine moral spiel, and then I pulled out that powder, set it afire covertly with a match and when Tim saw me apparently using hell-fire for snuff. I just thought he'd jump through the roof of the tent."

"He! He!" laughed Edith.

"Ho! Ho!" chimed in Basil.

"Haw! Haw!" put in Sleepy George.

As for Teeke.

Well, he kept the usual impassive mein of an Indian for some time.

Then his face cracked.

He gave an explosion like a fire-cracker.

Then his face ironed itself out.

It was Teeke's idea of a laugh.

Be it here written that this was the first time he had ever laughed in his life; sometimes he had smiled, but never had he laughed before. It is not written anywhere that Teeke ever laughed again.

"Then Apache Tim," said Edith, "fled from his own fears. His own fear of an unknown world drove him to his death. Well, well, 'conscience does make cowards of us all.'"

Then Edith turned to Morris.

"You were a very brave man," she said, "to take the risk you have done. You would have been killed instantly by the outlaw had he in the slightest degree tried in any way to penetrate your disguise by searching you—he knew you well, you know."

"Nonsense! Anyway, whether I did it or not, we are in a pretty fair way to be saved—but say, I've got a plan. I don't want those bandits to get away with anything," cried Morris.

"Tell us your plan?" cried all.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE OUTLAWS ARE PUZZLED.

"Whar's Apache Tim?" shrieked Wild Frank as soon as the bandits had been recalled from the woods in their vain search. "I kaint find him anywhar."

"Dunno," shouted Walla Walla Cy. "He ain't hyar. Thez no one seems ter hev seen him."

Poker Tom Hudson at this point came rushing to his fellow thugs.

His face was ashen.

His eyes lay out on his cheeks.

"Thunder!" he yelled, adding many oaths besides, "I seen the end o' Apache Tim."

"The end?" roared Wild Frank. "The end o' Apache Tim. Man what fer yar mean?"

Poker Tom went on.

"I sees Apache Tim a ridin' on his hoss. He was a goin' so fast thet I thought the Evil One was arter him. He was a screechin' an' a yellin' and then I hearn a shot. I sees Apache Tim throw up his hands. I knew he was shot thru' de brain. See?"

"Go on," yelled Wild Frank.

"Then I seez Apache Tim go a lickety-split right fer the brow on that thar canyon. Say, boy, yar ought ter uv seen that thar hoss jump. He makes a leap thet takes 'im w-a-y inter the middle o' the air thet's thar in thet canyon. Then I hears 'im go ker-flop down inter the valley berlow. The hoss was smashed ter jelly."

"Was Apache Tim dead?"

"Wall, ef a shot through his brain didn't kill 'im the fall did, seems ter me," drawled Poker Tom. "I looks deoun inter the valley and the whole shootin' match, lays thar, all bloody an' mashed ter atoms. It's the end o' Apache Tim boys. He's dead."

There were many white faces in the gang when the awful story was told.

Wild Frank called Poker Tom aside.

"You are sure that Apache Tim is dead?" he asked.

"Shore," replied Poker Tom. "There was no question of ut. I seen Apache Tim deader than a smelt with his face up ter the sky. Man, his whole haid was crushed in."

"The hoss was dead?"

"Smashed into a pulp."

"Then the band has no leader?"

"Et has you?"

"Well, I don't count."

"Yes yer do."

It was wonderful to see the dialect fall away from Wild Frank. Even Poker Tom noticed it. Frank talked now like a man from another world. Thug as he was even Poker Tom thought that here was a

man that might have been something if he had not grown crooked.

But Wild Frank now relapsed into his usual dialect way of speaking; the talk of the gun-man of the North-West.

"Thunder," he yelled, "Wall, ef Apache Tim is dead it's up ter me—My God, wots thet? Look at that! There cums Apache Tim on his gray hoss!"

The bandits whirled around to look in the direction that Wild Frank was pointing with white face and staring eyes.

There came a strange figure tearing over the plateau.

It was Apache Tim, every bandit saw.

The figure was white and ghostly like in its face.

Its great face was staring forward.

So deathly white was the face; so unearthly the look that Wild Frank howled in abject fear.

When Apache Tim raised his hand and it was seen that a seething flame enveloped it, the bandits broke and fled.

Crack!

Thus came the whip-like sound of a rifle.

It had hardly spoken when Wild Frank leaped high in the air.

He spun around on his heel.

His knees bent under him, and he fell upon his back dead.

This was enough for the outlaws.

As one man they dashed toward their horses.

They just flung themselves on the backs of the prancing steeds and went flying away over the mountains, helter-skelter, every man for himself, and not a thought for any other man.

Such a panic stricken gang never was known to hurry off at top speed in the North-West before.

The men rushed away only thinking of escape.

Behind them rifles and revolvers accelerated their speed.

Crack! Went the rifles.

Bang! Went the revolvers.

With every sound a bandit was struck by a leaden missile.

Several were killed at the first fire.

They went plunging off of their horses into the depths of the forest where their bodies lay to fester and rot, unburied for all time.

Others of the outlaws were sorely wounded.

Not a man dared look back among the flying renegades.

No one stopped to think as to where the leaden hail was coming from.

They only knew that with the death of Apache Tim and Wild Frank the outlaw band was leaderless.

They merely tried to get away to some place, they cared not where, so that they might escape the leaden hail, the ghostly return of their dead leader Apache Tim.

In five horrid minutes of fear, panic, and strife, the great Apache Tim gang was wiped out.

The plan of Gale Morris had succeeded.

The form of Apache Tim then dismounted.

It drew a bucket of water from a stream near at hand and began to wash the white clay off of its face.

In ten seconds not a bandit would have been deceived had they seen the face now displayed.

The face was that of Teeke, the Indian.

The clothes were that of Apache Tim, the bandit.

The plan of Gale Morris had been an exceedingly simple one.

It had been for Teeke, who was about the same size as the dead bandit to put on the outlaw's clothes.

A visit to a near-by white clay pile followed.

A liberal coating of the white clay had concealed the yellow skin of the Indian.

The next step had been to light some of the phosphorescent powder that Crazy Tommy had left in the Revolutionary soldier's snuff-box, and then the gray horse of Sleepy George was impressed into service.

While Teeke rushed down upon the outlaws clad as their dead leader, Apache Tim had been, and riding a gray horse such as had been seen to dash into the canyon with Apache Tim on his back, Edith, Basil, and Sleepy George had concealed themselves in the thicket about the bandit camp.

All had gone well.

The ghostly fire had added to the fears of the outlaws, an ignorant, and superstitious lot of men naturally.

Sleepy George had then let his rifle bellow out its dread sound.

The shot had cut through the life thread of Wild Frank.

The bandits were then robbed of the only leader they had left.

With no one to rally them they had degenerated in a trice, as bodies of men often do, into a horde of panic stricken men only intent on flight.

Edith, and Basil, and Teeke, himself, had then poured a terrible fire from revolvers and rifles at the fleeing outlaws.

Many had bit the dust.

Others escaped to bear scars of wounds received that day for the rest of their lives.

Gale Morris had at length put over his plans—each had won; he had not only aided greatly in the rescuing of his two friends Edith Ross, and Basil Tyler but he had practically alone stamped out the terrible bandit band of Apache Tim.

* * * * *

"Let's search the tent where we were confined," at length said Basil.

He, Edith, and the remainder of the party hurried into the tent.

There a great surprise met their eyes.

In a chest they found the loot of the outlaws in gold, and after they had returned to the village of Snake Basin, and the express company's gold had been returned they advertised far and wide the fact that they had more of the outlaws' plunder to be given up to those that had been robbed.

It took a long while to satisfy all demands but when every one had been satisfied there was enough of the outlaw gold left to make Basil, Edith, Sleepy George, and Gale Morris rich for life.

Teeke did not care to remain in Snake Basin longer than he could get out of it, so his share was sent to him in his far North retreat and it made him the richest Indian in British North America.

Of course, Edith and Basil's share was now in one portion—you see they were married within a week after they returned to Snake Basin.

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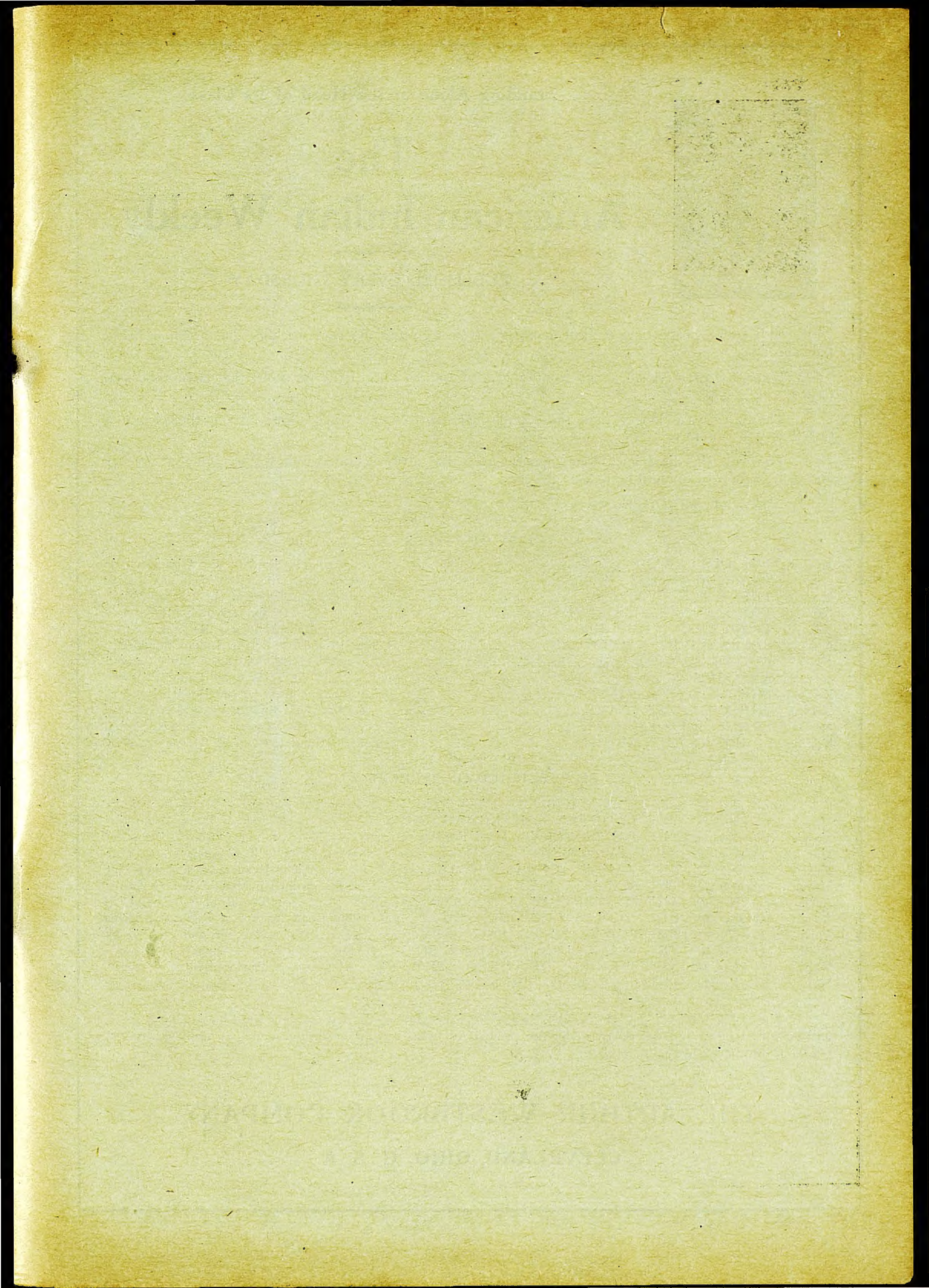
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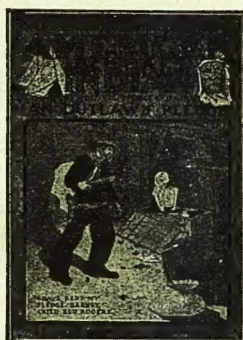
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- No. 4. THE SQUAW MAN'S REVENGEor Kidnapped by the Piutes
- No. 5. TRAPPED BY THE CREESor Tricked by a Renegade Scout
- No. 6. BETRAYED BY A MOCCASINor The Round-Up of the Indian Smugglers
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- No. 8. A DASH FOR LIFEor Tricked by Timber Wolves
- No. 9. THE DECOY MESSAGEor The Ruse of the Border Jumpers
- No. 10. THE MIDNIGHT ALARMor The Raid on the Paymaster's Camp
- No. 11. THE MASKED RIDERSor The Mystery of Grizzly Gulch
- No. 12. LURED BY OUTLAWS.....or The Mounted Ranger's Desperate Ride

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- March 2—No. 14. THE TRAGEDY OF HANGMAN'S GULCH.....or The Ghost of Horn Mountains
- March 9—No. 15. THE TREASURES OF MacKENZIE ISLES.....or The Outlaw's Drag-Net
- March 16—No. 16. HELD UP AT SNAKE BASIN.....or The Renegade's Death-Vote
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- March 30—No. 18. THE RED MASSACRE.....or The Hold-Up Men of Barren Lands
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- April 27—No. 22. THE SMUGGLERS OF LITTLE SLAVE LAKE.....or The Trapper's Vengeance
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